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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



[“MY FATHER’S INTEREST IN YOU WAS QUITE SUFFICIENT TO STIMULATE ME.”]

A LONG ESTRANGEMENT.

BY ERNEST BRENT,

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“Love’s Redemption,” “Waiting for the Tide,”
“Brookdale,” “Sweetbrier,” “The World’s
Wayside,” “Milly Lee,” “Strangely
Married,” &c.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN TIME OF NEED.

In time of sorrow,
When no day is known, but all’s dark night,
How sweet it is to hear the voice
Of one who is a friend.

WITH a sense of having travelled far at a great pace Minnie returned to consciousness. There was a delicious sense of the weariness that repose gives true relief to, and with a mind scarcely less at rest than her body she gazed round the place in which she was lying.

A room strange to her—humbly furnished but

cleanly—a fire of wood and coal, mingled, burning in the grate; an easy chair, old and time-worn, a few rush-bottomed ones, a table, a small chest of drawers, a door at the foot of the bed, and a window on the right. These things, with a few ordinary pictures on the walls, completed the list of things visible to the casual observer.

Minnie occupied the bed, and seemed to have been there for some time at least. Her ordinary apparel had disappeared. There was nothing near her that she could call her own.

But she was not troubled, the delirious lassitude was like the feeling the opium eater feels when first he has taken his dangerous dose, just before he launches away into wild, visionary scenes of delight. It was enough that she was there—at rest. She wished to know no more.

By-and-bye she glanced at the window and saw that there was snow without. It lay upon the patch of landscape visible to her, upon the ground, the trees—a distant church and a stile close by.

In the sky were dark, leaden-lined clouds, scarcely carrying a further burden of snow in their bosom.

“It is not a dream,” thought Minnie, languidly, “but I do not know how I came here. I have forgotten, but something—”

What it was she did not care to think of then, and turning from the light of a dim, wintry afternoon she closed her eyes. Sleep was creeping over her again, objects past and present were getting mixed in her thoughts, when the door opened and a quiet woman of forty, wearing a dress of dark blue print, with buff spots, white apron, and neat cap, entered the room. The noise she made, though slight, aroused Minnie, who turned quickly and looked her in the face.

“Oh! what a blessed change,” said the woman, stifling a tendency to cry out with joy. “You have come out of your trouble and will soon do well. Oh! how thankful I am.”

“Trouble!” said Minnie, softly. “What trouble have I had?”

“You have been ill—had a fever and been wandering. They wanted to cut off your beautiful hair—all of it—but I said no, and so said Jenny Green. Some had to be taken off, but there’s no great harm done. It isn’t like a limb.”

“Ill,” murmured Minnie, thoughtfully. “I suppose I must have been—and you must have been very kind to me.”

“Nothing more than one living creature ought to be to another,” replied the woman, turning to

the fire and giving it a needless stir. "Jenny Green has done most of the watching."

"I do not know Jenny Green."

"But you've met her, as you've met me, once before. Think now."

"I've a confused idea of having met you, but our acquaintance takes no definite form."

"Think now—a coldish day—a train travelling from Lynncastle to Wraxham Junction, a kind clergyman, two gossiping women—"

"I remember now," said Minnie, with a terrible despair showing itself in her eyes. "Oh! bitter, bitter day!"

"But you must not think of that," said the woman, as she hurried to her side. "It was wrong and thoughtless and foolish of me to talk to you. I was to give you this draught when you awoke. Oh, dear! drink it, darling, do."

With difficulty she induced Minnie to take it, and its effect was soon apparent. Minnie grew calmer again and spoke with composure.

"I daresay I alarmed you," she said. "I ought to have more command over myself."

"You had a great shock that day, no doubt," said the woman, shaking her head, "and the doctor says you were not well at the time, so with one thing and another it's no wonder you were took bad."

"But how came I here? and where am I?" asked Minnie.

"If you were standing where I am, dear, you would see the junction where it happened." Minnie repressed a shudder. "For I live handy to it. My name is Martha Smythe, and my husband does a bit of dealing, and this is our house. We have two children—a boy of twelve and a girl of ten—and they are both at school."

"And how long have I been a burden to you?"

"Not an hour," was the quick reply.

"How long have I been here? if you will have the question in that form."

"Let me see," said Martha Smythe, "come Friday it will be three weeks."

"Three weeks!"

"That's the time, dear; but it wouldn't matter if it were three months so as you've come out of it. Jenny Green said you would, and she is never wrong."

"She was your companion on the day we travelled together?"

"Yes, dear."

"I remember her kind face; and she has been watching by me!"

"Taking most of the night watches, for she's got no children. Mr. Daubeny—"

"Stay a moment," said Minnie, "there is some other kind friend coming in. Who is Mr. Daubeny?"

"The vicar of Poddleton Magna. He brought you here."

"I remember him coming to me at the station."

"Yes. You fainted dead away in his arms. He had you brought down here—helping you into a fly—and here you've been since. And you have no call to thank anybody here, for he bears for you handsome."

"No money can repay you," said Minnie. "Does he come to inquire after me?"

"Bless you, yes. He or Mr. Claude's been here about every other day."

"And who is Mr. Claude?"

"The vicar's only son, a handsome gentleman and a bit of a scamp, but with a good heart. He's been very anxious in his inquiries about you, and he always waits to see the doctor. There, now, I've told you all I can to-day, and you must not talk any more."

Minnie would fain have pursued the subject, but Martha Smythe was inexorable. She had already talked too much, she said, and really must hold her tongue until the morrow. Then she smoothed the pillows, arranged the room a little and fetched some beef tea and toast.

"It's pulled you down, dear," she said. "But quiet, rest, and some strengthening things will soon bring back your bloom. You've kept your good looks through it all, and that's more than most people could have done."

Minnie was left to herself again, and she lay watching the waning of the day. The form of a man came slowly over the fields, bearing towards the cottage—then entered it, and she heard his homely voice, naturally rough, subdued to meet the requirements of a sick house, asking if his tea were ready. Then the children, thoughtless in their buoyant spirits, came romping in, to be subdued by their mother; and lulled by the murmur of their softened voices she fell asleep.

To awaken again when night had come and to find the motherly Jenny Green, humble prophetess of good, watching by her side. Jenny would not talk to her, but gave her what she needed and bade her if she could sleep the long night through.

"It's the best doctor, my dear," she said, and rigid in the performance of her duty drew aside and would talk no more.

The sleep that was needed now came to Minnie and she was in perfect oblivion until dawn.

"More snow," said Martha Smythe, who was now in the room. "An early fall, and sign of a long winter. They say it broke down some of the telegraph wires last night, but how enough of the featherly stuff could lay on them bits of wires so as to break 'em I can't make out."

"What time is it?" asked Minnie.

"Just on eight, or it may be eight," Martha replied, "the seven-forty train hasn't come in yet, but it is sure to be late."

"Do you regulate your time by the trains?"

"As a rule, yes. We have a clock, but it's deceiving. So are the trains to a certain extent, but they are better than the clock. The post is best in the morning to go by. Dan Fox is seldom five minutes out."

"He is your postman?"

"Yes; and he came here with a letter for me this morning. It's from Mr. Daubeny. Mr. Claude will come over to make inquiries, but as he can't get back till the evening I'm to telegraph if there's a change for the worse."

"How have I been so fortunate as to gain the interest of so kind a man?" asked Minnie.

"There's no telling," replied Martha, shaking her head, "but you've got it, and that's enough. Now I'm off again, and I mustn't talk so much. You are to have an egg and a bit of toast for breakfast, and I'll have 'em ready in a twinkling."

So Mr. Claude was coming that day to make inquiries, and he was handsome, but a little wild. Minnie was not above owning a womanly interest in men, and she would have liked to see this vicar's son when he called. Martha was of opinion that he would not come, as the snow was still falling and the roads getting into a blocked condition, but she had the misfortune to be a prophetess with no more insight into the future than is allotted to racing tipsters and the compilers of prophetic almanacs. She was generally in the wrong, and would have made a very able member of the Meteorological Society, to whom we are indebted for forecasts of the weather in the daily papers. She said that Mr. Claude would not come, and before noon he was knocking at the door.

In a building of the limited area which the cottage possessed a voice of average volume can be heard all over it. The voice of Claude Daubeny was not loud, but it was clear, and there was a ring in it as musical as the distant sound of the hammer on the anvil.

Minnie heard him asking about her, and his voice was pleasing to her.

"His face lighted up with as much pleasure," said Martha when she came upstairs again, "as if you had been his dearest friend, and yet he has never seen you."

"He is naturally sympathetic, I should say," Minnie replied.

"He's too generous, and his generosity has led him into many a scrape," said Martha. "He's been wild, but I don't think it's the wildness that deserves the name of vice. There never came a word from his lips or a look from his eyes that a woman need shrink from."

"I suppose he has—I hardly know how to

put the question—embarrassed himself—or the vicar?" said Minnie.

"He ran through a lot of money, no doubt," replied Martha, sitting upon the bed, "but he is one of those who always fall upon their feet. He's had two nice little fortunes left him, and now he's got a third. The vicar's had some money left him, and he needs it. The living of Poddleton isn't worth much. You heard what Mr. Claude said when he was going?"

"No; not distinctly."

"I'm to let them know when you are able to come down a bit, and the vicar will run over to see you."

"Perhaps I shall be able to get up to-morrow."

"Get up on FRIDAY!" exclaimed Martha, holding her hands up in horror. "No, you are not to run the risk of a relapse. No Fridays for me."

"But you surely do not believe in such absurd superstition?"

"It may be absurd to some, but not to those who know, my dear. No, you do not get up on Friday in this house—nor Saturday, for it's cleaning day; but on Sunday we'll have you down a bit. My Tom is as strong as a horse, and he shall carry you."

The Sunday came, and Minnie, rapidly becoming convalescent and impatient of the restraint of a sick-chamber, rose from her couch to find herself much weaker than she expected. It was as much as she could do to stand alone for a few moments, but her kind attendants were prepared for the consequence. Martha brought out her clothes from the chest of drawers, dressed her, and Tom Smythe, a man of giant frame, with a tendency to staccato and breathe hard when he was astonished or overcome in any way, carried her downstairs with the tenderness of a mother with her child.

A couch had been arranged by the fire and behind it a screen to keep away any possible draught, and they would have given up the fire to her if she had permitted it.

"No," she said, "you must sit here with me. The children, too—let them come by my side. I am not a great lady. I am only a woman who had need of friends and found them."

It was about eleven o'clock when they brought her down, and Martha having the dinner to prepare was obliged to absent herself. Tom Smythe remained, and Minnie insisted upon him smoking his usual pipe. She had detected the faint aroma of tobacco in the room.

After some demurring he lit his pipe and took his seat by the fire with the bowl thrust up the chimney, and nothing would induce him to modify that way of smoking.

"Don't trouble, miss," he said, "a smoke's a smoke, whether the bowl of the pipe is in the room or out of it. I'm enjoying myself amazin'."

There had been no snow to speak of since Thursday, and the prophecies of evil, who arose in great numbers when the snow began, failed to see their predictions of snow up to the house tops verified. Already traffic had made the roads passable, and boys and men were wandering about the fields in the listless way of those who make the day of rest one of absolute idleness, and the bright sun shone clear in a light blue sky.

"Ah! there's the last train till after service, miss," said Tom Smythe. "We shall be quiet now till half-past one or so."

"Where does it come from?" asked Minnie.

"From Lynncastle and therabouts, miss," Tom replied.

"Poddleton Magna is that way, I think."

"Yes, miss, about five miles the other side of it."

"It has no station then?"

"Bless you, miss, no; and they wouldn't have it if they could. They are mighty contented sort of people at Poddleton, and don't want to be disturbed with changes."

The train came from Lynncastle, and Poddleton Magna was on the other side of the town. It was possible that Claude Daubeny might be coming by that train. Minnie hoped he

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had come, and yet for some undefinable reason feared to see him. Perhaps it was owing to the nervousness natural to one in so weak a state, and she was disposed to smile at it—was indeed smiling at her folly—when a shadow crossed the window and a quiet knock was heard at the door.

"That's Mr. Claude," said Tom Smythe, rising hastily. "Come in, sir!"

The door opened and a tall, lithe young fellow with a handsome, happy face entered with a huge St. Bernard dog at his heels.

"I hope you have good news for me, Smythe," he began; then, perceiving the sofa and its occupant, hastily closed the door and advanced to Minnie's side.

"I am rejoiced to see you here," he said, "but perhaps you have not the least idea who I am."

"I suppose you are Mr. Claude Daubene," Minnie said, "to whom I am deeply indebted."

"Not at all," he said, as he took the slender hand extended towards him. "My father's interest in you was quite sufficient to stimulate me to take upon myself the fatigue of making an inquiry. And I am fond of a railway journey; so is Pompey. See, how anxious he is to make friends with you."

The huge dog had put his noble head upon the sofa as an incitement for a caress. Minnie patted and stroked him, and he seemed to feel that he was highly honoured and flattered. His huge tail expressed unbounded satisfaction by swinging ponderously to and fro.

"Of course I am not to fatigue you with too much talking," said Claude Daubene, "but I must deliver a message I have for you."

"I am getting used to talking again. Mrs. Smythe and I talk great deal."

"I am glad of that, for I am a great talker myself and need not hurry away for a minute. Smythe, you need not go."

"I think the wife wants me for a bit," replied Smythe, "and the children ought to run out for awhile. Go along, youngsters, and get back before the first down train comes in."

Thus it happened that Minnie and Claude were left together within a few minutes of their first meeting, but, thanks to Pompey, who could be caressed in moments of nervousness, Minnie was not very much embarrassed. Claude was quite at his ease without showing any undue familiarity.

"The message I have," he said, "is to ask you, Miss Lockhart—we got your name from your luggage—is from my father. He hopes that as soon as you are strong enough to travel that you will come down to Poddleton for a time. Poddleton is dull, not to say flat, but it is horribly healthy. All the sick people who come to it get well instantly, and the inhabitants have to go away to die."

"It cannot be quite so healthy as that comes to," said Minnie, smiling.

"Well, perhaps not; it's a way I have of speaking occasionally. It is healthy without a doubt, and apart from that you must come. We want you, Phyllis—that's my sister—has nobody to speak to—my dear mother died ten years ago you know—and the vicar says come you must."

"After so much kindness," said Minnie, "I ought not to hesitate before I further impose upon you."

"I may as well tell you," Claude interposed, "that I dare not go back with a refusal. The vicar would never forgive me, and Phyllis would mourn like Rachel and refuse to be comforted. I must have a yes to take back with me or never see the home of my childhood again."

Under cover of this light, extravagant way of speaking there lay an earnestness that told Minnie how honest was the invitation extended to her. Claude's eyes, too, pleaded for himself; they looked too honest to feign. And what could be more welcome to her just then than the shelter of a refined home? She could not refuse.

"I will say a simple yes to the generous invitation you give me," she said. "No words that I have at my command could express what

I feel. You are more than good and kind to me."

"Then for the present I am safe," said Claude. "I need not leave the home of my youth. When do you think you can come? Tomorrow?"

"Oh, no, I fear not."

"Tuesday, Wednesday. Let us say Wednesday. If the weather hold fine and we wrap you up you can come to no harm. I will bring Phyllis with me on Wednesday, and between us we will get you to Poddleton or perish in the attempt. You are sure you would not like to come on Tuesday?"

"I am very weak," said Minnie, "and fear I must not travel so soon. It is not a question of choice."

"Wednesday, then," Claude said. "And now I'll just go and ask Mrs. Smythe for a glass of her famous home-brewed ale and relieve you of my presence."

He got his ale, but he did not leave for some time. As a matter of fact he stayed until the fast down train was signalled and then had to run to catch it.

"I promised to be home in the afternoon," he said, as he was leaving, "good bye, and don't forget we are coming for you on Wednesday—not Thursday—but Wednesday remember."

And then as the door closed behind him it seemed to Minnie as if all the sunshine of the day had departed with him.

CHAPTER IX.

GOING WITH THE STREAM.

I think her a woman of the sweetest eye,
Of wondrous beauty, with godly grace
And comely personage; and I do swear
That I must love her.

ONCE upon a time there had been two villages bearing the name of Poddleton. Hence the name of Poddleton Magna. But Little Poddleton had either disappeared or been abandoned, and only one remained, and it clung with much tenacity to the title of Magna, although the need of it as a distinguishing feature had long disappeared.

Poddleton was not what in these commercial days might be considered a thriving place, but its inhabitants were for the most part comfortably situated in a pecuniary sense. Their wants were few and they could satisfy their wants, which in a great deal more than a good ninety per cent. of the world can do.

There were the poor, of course. We "have the poor always with us," wherever we may go, but the poor of Poddleton were not like the general poor of the country. Poddleton kept its poor and never allowed anyone to apply for outdoor relief from the recognised authorities or go into the house. The farmers subscribed a little, and generally allowed the vicar to do the rest towards keeping the needy people of the parish with food and shelter.

"The vicar had always done it," they said, and when the present vicar, Mr. Daubene, came into his meagre living he found himself very heavily weighted with some dozen old women, and men to match, who expected, like the young ravens, to be fed. In sporting parlance he was so heavily weighted that he could scarcely make any running, and speedily came to a dead-lock.

Embarrassments stared him in the face, the wind whistled the word Bankruptcy through the keyhole. He dreamt continually of paying compositions varying from eighteenpence to nothing in the pound, until a distant relative left him a nice little sum of money and so set him along the road of life with wheels newly greased.

He had many ups and downs which need not be recounted here, and at the time of our story was in a position to smile at the ills of the past, enjoy the present, and look the future fearlessly in the face.

His one trouble, though he scarcely made it one, was his son Claude, who was erratic, careless, and inclined to live for the hour only; but he loved him with his whole heart, and where true

lore is no real misery can find a lasting resting-place.

He had also a balm against many ordinary ills of life in the form of his daughter Phyllis—"Pretty Miss Phyllis" the people called her—who had much of her brother's nature, tempered with a fair share of discretion. She did some things occasionally which very straight-laced people would have called "odd," broke in a pony now and then, rode bare back about the fields when the fit was on her, and could look any man straight in the face; but there was no evil thought in the healthy heart that throbbed within her.

She was a blonde, with more colour than a town beauty in her mistaken idea of the becoming would care to own, and all round was a mighty pretty little creature—aged twenty—and heart free.

The fact was Poddleton had no real society, the big swells were far away and all the little swells gathered near them.

So many of the farmers round Poddleton owned their own land that it was not worth the while of any great landlord to take up his residence there. So they all lived away.

The vicarage was a delightful house. Old enough to have a rustic appearance, but not ancient enough to lack the comforts civilisation has devised. It stood at one end of the village in the inside of a large garden where in season there were fruits and flowers in abundance, mostly of the old-fashioned sort, but all very delightful and wholesome.

On the day that Phyllis and her brother brought Minnie home there was little to be seen but bare trees and snow, but for all that it was a pleasing place to the eye. It was full of promise, and made people think of the coming glories of summer, and inspired strangers particularly with the feeling of being in "a home."

They were all in the drawing-room, commanding a view of the garden—the vicar, his children and Minnie—and the vicar was in a state of amiable delight that put a joyous halo around him.

He would scarcely let anyone else speak, but put questions and answered them himself, like a man who has a certain amount of talking to get over in a given time and means to do it.

At last he was satisfied that Minnie had not suffered by the way and did not want anything pending the arrival of four-o'clock tea, which on that day was to make its appearance nearly an hour before the usual time.

Claude made him sit down and begged as a favour that he might be able in turn to give his tongue a little exercise.

"The Smythe people," he said, "all cried when we came away, except Smythe's pater, who clutched the hair on the top of his head and held on with a deadly grip, that being, I respectfully assume, his way of stifling the emotions."

"Don't be absurd, Claude," said Phyllis. "But am I absurd?" he asked. "I appeal to Minnie. I can't call her Miss Lockhart, father, for it seems absurd, seeing that we are to be a family party for the time. I appeal to you, Minnie, if I have done injustice to Smythe's pater. Did he grasp his hair or not?"

"He put his hand over his head once or twice," replied Minnie, with laughing eyes, "but I don't remember that he was grasping his hair."

"Enough," said Claude, with melo-dramatic indignation. "I see I have enemies by my own fireside. Then Pompey—how invaluable that dog was, marching at his feet to clear the way and selecting an unoccupied compartment so that we could travel by ourselves. There he is now outside, you see; he cannot rest from you—fond, sensible dog!"

So he rattled on, but by-and-bye there settled a thoughtfulness upon Minnie which grew deeper and deeper as the evening approached, and finally found expression in her asking the vicar if she could speak a few words with him alone.

"It is about—the accident that day," she said, falteringly.

"But why speak of it at all?" said the vicar, cheerily.

Phyllis and Claude had already risen and left the room, pleading different engagements.

"I must speak of it," said Minnie, "for I think I knew him—who—Was he killed?"

"My dear child," replied the vicar, "he was killed at once. How could it be otherwise? He was crossing the line, just where crossing is forbidden, in deep thought, some think, when the engine rushed down upon him. If he had been one step farther he would have been dashed to pieces. As it was he was killed."

It was dark and there being no light in the room the worthy vicar could not see her face, but he was sensibly aware that she shuddered and sighed deeply.

"What a sad end—how awful—how terrible."

"Yes, my dear child; but you say you knew him."

"Years ago I knew him well. I saw him the day before he met with his death. We met by accident at Lynncastle."

"Such meetings are not so rare, only this will be indelibly fixed on your memory. You had better try to forget it."

"I never can forget."

"Never?"

"No, for if I had not seen him killed I never could have forgotten that we had met."

"My dear child," said the vicar, "I see that there are some very painful associations in connection with that accident. Whatever they are put them aside now. Whatever they are you may, if you are so disposed, tell me at some future time."

"I have only one more question to ask," Minnie said.

"Well, one more then."

"Was his name known?"

"On, yes. I have a remembrance that he was claimed at the inquest under the name of—what was it? Oh! Jerningham—yes, under the name of Jerningham, of course. I was told that he had been acting at Lynncastle—"

"It is all true then," said Minnie, drearily. "Do not speak to me for a minute, please."

He sat still for many minutes, remaining so until she spoke again. Her voice then was low but calm.

"By-and-bye," she said, "I may tell you my history, at present I could not. Meanwhile I will not obtrude my sorrows here."

"It shall be our task to lighten them," said the vicar.

Then he rang the bell for lights, and Claude and Phyllis returned. They got their cue from the vicar immediately. Without any demonstrative gaiety they contrived to make the evening a very pleasant one.

"So he is dead" was Minnie's thought when she was alone for the night, "and all the misery and misunderstanding of the past can never be explained. It was he who chose the road. I could not avoid treading it. Poor Algernon!"

She was already in mourning, and there was no need for any further show of grief in her attire, and what she felt and endured was otherwise hidden. She could not be less than cheerful and happy in such a home.

As she grew stronger she went out for walks and drives, and Claude was invariably one of her companions. He was ever bright and genial, but now a change began to be observed in him. The gaiety sobered down, and he was sometimes thoughtful, occasionally absent-minded. Phyllis began to notice him with interest.

So the days and weeks went by, and at length Minnie was strong again. She felt that she ought to be doing something in the world, but the vicar would not hear of it.

"Not yet," he said, "the weather is still cold and bleak, and you may have a relapse. Wait until the spring. We cannot part with you until the last moment."

"But I cannot be always idling here. It is not right for me to be dependent upon you," Minnie urged.

"You shall not be so, neither are you now. It is we who are dependent upon you for pleasant companionship. Ask Phyllis—ask Claude—"

"I do not think I will ask Claude," said

Minnie, "he only echoes you—he emulates your generosity."

But they heard of her intention—Phyllis first, from the vicar, and she carried the news to her brother. He changed colour and turned away.

"Phyllis," he said, hurriedly, "you must not let her go."

"But she cannot, as she says, stay with us for ever."

"Do you wish her to go?"

"Oh! no—no."

"Why then should I part with her so hastily? Can you not guess my secret, Phyllis?"

"I have guessed it, dear Claude. You love her."

"Ay, with my whole heart."

(To be Continued.)

THE ORIGIN OF WHIST.

WHIST is a well-known game at cards, which requires great attention and silence; hence the name. To be a good whist player requires not only very high mental and intellectual power but considerable study and long practice. This fine game has always commanded the attention of men of the first order of mind. Whist is unquestionably of English origin, though as to the time and place of its birth we do not possess any precise evidence. Whist is not mentioned by Shakespeare, nor by any writer of the Elizabethan era, from which we may infer that the game was then scarcely in existence. The game seems to have manifested seductive powers in 1630, for Taylor, the water poet, mentions whist as inducing the prodigal to "fling his money free with carelessness."

It is probable that at this period the character and friends of whist were decidedly low. Whist even appears in the "lockup" in the questionable company of Jonathan Wild. Fielding records that when the ingenious Count la Ruse was domiciled with Geoffrey Snap (who enjoyed office under the Sheriff of London) his countship sought to beguile the tedium of his indoor existence by recourse to the amusements of the day. Mr. Snap's two daughters benevolently aided him, and chose J. Wild to make up their parties.

Whist and swabber (which is only whist under an alias) was then (1632) greatly in vogue, and much appreciated. In the "Memoirs of the Lives, Intrigues and Comical Adventures of the most famous Gamesters," from the time of Charles II. to that of Queen Anne, we come across a sharper named Johnson, whose last adventure was that he was hanged in 1660. Of him it is written that he excelled in the art of "securing" honours for himself and partner when playing at whist.

We next hear of whist frequenting public houses in London, but it contrived after a time to escape from its tavern acquaintances, and early in the eighteenth century, though not as yet fashionable, it had at least become respectable. Its principal friends at this epoch were country squires and country parsons. Alexander Pope in 1715 alludes to whist in conjunction with the squirearchy; and Swift, in his "Essay on the Fates of Clergymen," in 1723, says the clergy indulged in the society of whist. This patronage does not seem to have been equal to the task of altogether retrieving whist from the character of vulgarity.

Better days, however, were in store for it. About 1730 a party of gentlemen, of whom the first Lord of Folkestone was one, frequented the Crown Coffee-house in Bedford Row and introduced whist, studied the game, and it is believed discovered some of its principles. In 1743 whist was adopted by Emanuel Hoyle, who is called the father of the game. Under his auspices whist made the acquaintance of all the rank and fashion of England, and travelled across the channel during the Anglomania which prevailed in France through the latter part of the

eighteenth century. It was even represented at Versailles. It was welcomed at all the chocolate houses, clubs and fashionable assemblies. It became the lion of the day. It was talked about and written about. Once really known, it was esteemed a universal favourite, admired and respected by all, and has retained its ascendancy until now.

SINGULAR PROGNOSTICS.

On the eve of the day of the assassination of Julius Caesar the temple of Jupiter Stator trembled to its foundation, and an enormous piece of rock fell from the height of the capitol and carried with it a Roman standard bearer, who was on guard at the opening of the road.

The generals of Alexander the Great noticed that the morning of the death of their great captain the armour which he wore at the passage of the Granicus and the battle of Arbela perspired all over and exhaled a smell like that of a dead body.

Every year on the anniversary of the battle of Marathon, a day of victory and liberty for the Greeks, there was heard in the plains where the battle was fought a great clashing of arms and a noise as of the shouts of persons rousing each other to the combat.

Dessaix, on his departure for the campaign of Italy, on his return from Egypt, said to his friends who were congratulating him upon the new laurels he was going to gather, "You will not perhaps see me; the bullet is no longer our friend." The day of Marengo was the anniversary of one of his victories in Upper Egypt.

The day of the violent death or rather the assassination of Charles XII. they experienced at Stockholm a hurricane more dreadful than any which had occurred within the memory of man. The arms of the Swedish Ambassador at London also fell with a crash.

Duguesclin, on advancing to lay siege to Randan, fell from his horse, and his constable's sword, which he then held in his hands, buried itself so deep in the earth that it required a powerful effort to draw it out. His bier was decorated with the keys of the conquered towns.

On the day of the entry of the Russians, Austrians, and Prussians into Paris, the great branch of the tree under which Maréchal Catigny lay buried at St. Gratien fell with a loud noise.

The Prince of Navarre (afterwards Henry IV., while playing at dice with several personages of Charles VI.'s court, on the eve of St. Bartholomew, observed several drops of blood fall on the cloth, which spread consternation among the players. The mother of Varus, a Roman lady of the highest distinction, on the day of her son's defeat perceived large tears to fall from his bust. A fearful eclipse foretold to Rome and to Augustus the massacre of his legions and the first personages of the state.

Gustavus Adolphus, when young, received from a lady whom he very much loved an iron ring which he never allowed to leave him. It was composed of seven circles, which formed the letters of his two names. Seven days before his death it was taken from him without his perceiving this extraordinary theft.

Mr. SAMUEL MOELEY has returned from his visit to the United States more of an Englishman than ever. One fact which struck him was that few Americans get rich by steady application to work. They prefer speculation. Omnipotent for the future!

An International Fisheries Exhibition will be held at Edinburgh on the 12th of April next. It will include all kinds of articles connected with or illustrative of the fisheries of the world, and will be open to exhibitors from all countries. The Duke of Edinburgh is the president.



[HESBA RECOILED AS IF FROM A SPECTRE.]

SCARCELY SINNING. A NEW NOVEL.

BY A POPULAR AUTHOR.

CHAPTER XL.

If hearty sorrow
Be a sufficient ransom for offence,
I tender it here. I do as truly suffer
As e'er I did commit.

THE day following her interview with Frank Leslie was one of unutterable anguish for Hesba. Now she was indeed reaping the bitter fruits of her misdoing. When she took her first step in the evil way she had thought that there was no necessity to go faster or farther than she could control. Vain thought! She had since been taught by bitter experience that too often when the first step has been made in the way of evil the others are forced on the hapless sinner and that results never dreamed of at the outset become almost a necessity in the end.

This had been particularly Hesba's own experience. At first what seemed so easy and pleasant as her projected sin? Sin! why, she could not consent in her own heart to call the act she contemplated by so harsh a name. Death had removed her friend and made her place vacant. Who would be injured if she, Hesba Chepstow, stepped in to fill it? No one. She would gain the means of succouring her family. She would lead a pleasant, easy life. She could from time to time observe her dear ones from some point of 'vantage where she should herself be unseen. Once overcome the primary objections to a life of deception and what more easy and profitable than her scheme?

Alas for the futility of all human plans. The

ploughman poet of Scotland will remind us that:

The best-laid schemes o' mice and men
Gang aft a-gley,
And leave us naught but woe and pain
For promised joy.

So had it been with Hesba.

Instead of the wealth which she expected she found an impoverished estate with scanty prospect of replenishing her purse when she had spent her little store which she discovered in Miss Lovelace's desk.

Instead of a free, heartwhole life, she had given—as she could not choose but acknowledge to herself—her heart to Lucius Lovelace in an altogether hopeless affection, and, worse than this, found that by the colonel's arrangement she must contract a marriage with one whom, of all men, she most hated and detested, Simon Dawson the younger. And as if this were not sufficient now to fill her cup of misery to the full, this young madman—Frank Leslie—must turn up, and when disappointed overwhelm her with reproach and brand her as a perfumed woman, while she dared not reply to his bitter objurgations.

In view of these heavy trials Hesba's heart turned longingly to those whom she loved at the old home. Could she but look again in their beloved faces, even though her own were hidden—could she but hear again the well-remembered tones of her mother's voice, even though she heard them but as a spy—she fancied she could gather some peace, some strength to bear her heavy trials.

Her resolution was taken. She would make her way to the cottage of Mrs. Chepstow and strive to hear her mother's voice, to see her mother's face.

Having taken her resolution, Hesba was not slow to carry it into effect. That very evening she decided the experiment should be made.

Late in the afternoon she started on foot upon her journey. The distance was considerable, but she did not care to order out the brougham in

case Lucius might come over that day and trouble her with inconvenient questions on her return.

The journey took her even longer than she had imagined and evening had closed in, and the soft lustre of the harvest moon bathed the lane in which her mother's cottage stood, when she reached it. She was not sorry such was the case.

During the daytime it would scarcely have been possible to act the part of a spy over the inmates of the cottage. But any small space left uncovered by the window curtain would enable her to peer inside now the lamp was lighted.

But all her anticipations were doomed to disappointment.

She lifted the latch of the garden gate and passed lightly along the path leading to the cottage. She had traversed half the distance when she arrested her steps as suddenly as if they had been stayed by a thunderbolt.

On a rustic seat under a large weeping-ash sat the figure of a woman garbed in black. At the sound of Hesba's footsteps she had turned her eyes in her direction, and slowly rising to her feet confronted the intruder.

Hesba recoiled as if from a spectre.

She might well do so.

Alike in face, alike in figure, alike in their black garments, the two women formed "counterfeits presents" of each other.

Then each spoke.

"Hesba!"

"Miranda!"

Hesba tottered to the seat and fell helplessly upon it, holding one white hand before her startled eyes.

"Am I mad?" she said, in a tremulous tone, "or do my eyes look upon a spectre?"

"Neither," was the reply. "You see her who was Miranda Lovelace in times past."

An irrepressible fit of shuddering passed over Hesba's frame.

"Why then are you here?" she queried, timidly.

"Because there was nowhere else to go. When my false friend ranked me amongst the dead and took my place amongst the living, this refuge was all that remained to me."

Hesba slid from the seat and knelt with uplifted hands to the speaker.

"Oh, Miranda, pardon me," she cried, in an agonised voice. "I, and all others, imagined you lay at the bottom of that ill-fated lake, and the temptation to live an easier life and to grasp the means of aiding those I love was too great for me. But whatever evil I have done may now be remedied, and I know your kind heart too well to question that you will forgive me."

Miranda laid one hand lightly on the girl's shoulder.

"Rise, Hesba," she said.

"Not until I hear the accents of pardon."

"I forgive you, freely. You have done me good rather than ill."

"No, no; I have wronged you deeply, but fortunately it is not too late. It will be easy now to resume our proper positions."

"I have no idea of doing so," said Miranda, coldly, as Hesba rose to her feet.

"Indeed!" exclaimed the latter, in surprise.

"Yes, it is so."

"I could not think of retaining your place now I am aware that you are still living. The change must be made at once."

"It will not be made, I can guess the reason of your alacrity in agreeing to the change. You have seen Simon Dawson?"

Even by the pallid moonbeams the hot flush that came over Hesba's face was plainly perceptible.

"Ah, your face tells the story. It is easy to see why you would escape from the position in which you have placed yourself. I cannot permit it. With your eyes open you chose your own path. It is a path in which there is no turning back. You have thrust me from my position and forced me to occupy this more humble one. I am content. I shall have no more exchanges."

An angry look passed Hesba's face.

"Yes, you are right," she said; "I have seen Simon Dawson and the position is unendurable. I will not maintain it. You say you will not exchange again. It is not in your power to avoid it. If I declare my deception to your brother Lucius and to Simon Dawson can you doubt that they will reinstate you in your proper position?"

"If you do; but you will not. I will be very frank with you, Hesba; you made the first false move and now the game is in my hands, and I am fully justified in playing it as I think fit. You chose to take my place; I chose to retain yours. For the rest you dare not make the confession of which you speak."

"Dare not!"

"No; to do so would be to consign yourself to a convict prison."

Hesba started involuntarily.

"I will be frank with you," went on Miranda, "and you will be wise to exercise frankness in return. From whence obtained you the money you sent to your mother?"

Hesba was silent. But again the burning blush arose to her face.

"Enough!" said Miranda. "I need no other witness than the tell-tale blood which stains your face. You have placed yourself in the position of a criminal and are in my power. But I will be merciful, no word of mine shall expose the sins you have committed. Only—Miranda Lovelace you have made yourself, and Miranda Lovelace you shall remain."

"To what end?" queried Hesba, shuddering.

"That you may become the wife of Simon Dawson and free Lovelace Manor from the claims upon it. Do this and you shall retain your position safely and unmolested. Fail, and I will deliver you to the hands of the law as an impostor and forger, and a convict prison will be your doom. Think what that involves! Think of the misery and humiliation that such a fate will bring upon your mother and your brother! Reflect well."

Hesba sank again on the seat, pale and trembling.

"You are very cruel!" she said. "Woe to

you if Heaven is as pitiless as you are! It is true that I succumbed to sudden temptation, but my life since then has been one unceasing contrition. But you will enforce me to embrace a life-long agony, for I have told you what this Dawson is."

"That misery would have been mine had you been honest and true. Remember it was your own act that brought you into this position. Now the drama must be played out; my father's commands must be obeyed, and Lucius must have the old home of his ancestors restored to him unfettered."

The mention of Lucius Lovelace's name caused a fresh pang at Hesba's heart.

"The sacrifice will be useless to him," she replied, in a sombre voice.

"Why?" queried Miranda, sharply.

"He has vowed that he will not take advantage of it. He fell into a fit of passionate anger when I told him my determination to wed Simon Dawson and showed him Colonel Lovelace's letter to you. He asserted he would not take advantage of the sacrifice."

"How can he choose but do so?"

"He said if the marriage came off he would leave his native land for ever."

A long interval of silence ensued. The minds of both girls were busy.

Some sensation of pity was creeping into Miranda's heart, strengthened by her old liking for Hesba. She had no desire to blight the girl's life by tying her to a monster like Simon Dawson, unless the end which her father desired could be effected.

If it were true that Lucius refused to avail himself of the sacrifice would it not be cruel and impolitic to cause it to be consummated? Would it not be well to take time for further consideration? The matter might be adjourned, at least for that night.

Hesba's thoughts in the meantime suddenly turned to her visitor of the preceding day. If all that Frank Leslie had told her was true might it not be that Miranda loved him still? And if she learned he were living might this not induce her to resume her real rank and position?

However that might be, Hesba's heart held still sufficient love for her former friend to induce her to impart the intelligence in the hope that it might be welcome.

The silence was presently broken by Miranda.

"Have you or Lucius," she said, "held any correspondence with Simon Dawson?"

"I saw him two days since," said Hesba.

"And the result?"

"And I consented to become his wife," was the low-voiced response.

"Then all is settled?"

"It was, but the fact of your existence gives me hope of escape. You know from what I have told you in past times how I loathe such an accursed fate."

"Yet you agreed to embrace it apparently."

"For Lucius's sake."

The words were nearly inaudible, but Miranda caught them and a sudden flush of intelligence came in her eyes; and her look was less stern and her voice less cold when she spoke again.

"'Tis a strange tangle," she said. "I have no desire to be hard upon you, Hesba; perhaps something may be decided upon before your next interview with Dawson, at least we will let the matter remain in abeyance for to-night."

"Thanks, thanks, dear Miranda!" cried Hesba, with clasped hands, her eyes streaming with tears. "And we will exchange places?" she queried.

Miranda shook her head gravely.

"No, I am content with this lot. My life is peaceful and not without its joys. I know what I have never known before—the love of mother and sister. The earnings of my hands suffice to keep them and me, and I am content."

Hesba stepped closer and laid her hand impulsively on Miranda's arm.

"But there may be another love still stronger which can draw you to your own home?"

Miranda shook her head.

"That of Lucius?" she said, questioningly.

"No, not that of Lucius, although of one of his sex."

A puzzled look crept over Miranda's face.

"What do you mean?" she said.

"Suppose one whom you had loved and who had loved you dearly, but whom you thought to see no more on earth, had escaped death and captivity; had struggled through toils and sorrows for your sake; had come from the ends of the earth to seek you; would you hide your face from him?"

Miranda's tall form trembled so violently that she was under the necessity of supporting herself by the arm of the seat on which Hesba was sitting.

"Of whom speak you?" she said, brokenly.

"Of Mr. Frank Leslie."

Miranda started violently and became pale to the very lips.

"He is dead," she ejaculated; "dead long since, and he's in an unknown grave in a far foreign land."

"He is living—living and well, and trod the acres of Lovelace Manor but yesterday, his heart full of unchanged love for you."

"You are mad, or dreaming!"

"Not so. He came to seek you to proffer his unchanged love. He was easily deceived by the remarkable resemblance between us, and never doubted that he was addressing the woman whom he loved."

"And you?"

"My position was full of anxiety and peril. It appeared from what he said that on the previous day he had met Simon Dawson in the park, and that the latter had informed him that Miranda Lovelace was his affianced bride. Hence Leslie came full of fiery indignation, which he poured out upon me for my supposed perfidy."

"And you avowed it?"

"There was no other course open to me."

"How did the interview terminate?"

"He left in an access of furious passion and overwhelmed me with reproaches."

"And will never return?"

"So he asserted."

During this colloquy Miranda's colour went and came, and she seemed scarcely able to support herself. At its conclusion she gave a deep sigh, and said, in a bitter tone:

"And so my cup of happiness which might have been mine has been dashed from my lips for ever by your mendacity and deception!"

"Not so, Miranda," said Hesba, remonstrating.

"How can it be otherwise?"

Hesba drew a small porrimonaise from her pocket, and, opening it, took out a gentleman's visiting card, which she presented to Miranda.

"He let this fall," she said, "accidentally."

It bore the words:

MR. FRANK LESLIE,

Claridge's Hotel,

Piccadilly."

"A line from you will bring him to your feet," she said. "If ever a man loved truly—it is he."

Just at that juncture the front door of the house opened and Mrs. Chepstow's voice was heard.

"Hesba, Hesba!" she cried, "the dew is falling. Please come in."

"I must leave you," said Miranda, holding out her hand to Hesba. "All is forgiven between you and me. This last good news you bring is sufficient to balance much evil doing against me. Let the matter of Simon Dawson rest, and the day after to-morrow I, closely veiled, will seek you at Lovelace Manor, when we can talk over our plans. Good night!"

She held out her hand, which Hesba grasped, almost convulsively.

"Good night, Miranda," she said, "noble, forgiving sister. How can I ever thank you enough?"

Then, as they were about to part, Hesba said:

"One thing more. Can I not look once on those I love?"

And she nodded in the direction of the cot.

"Yes; I will turn back a corner of the curtain."

And Miranda made her way to the house. Following her noiselessly Hesba reached the cottage window. The curtain had been so disposed as to readily command a view of the interior of the room.

Mrs. Chepstow was seated by one side of the fire of blazing beech billets and Miranda on the other, little Ada being perched on a stool at Miranda's feet and leaning her sunny head on the latter's lap. Mrs. Chepstow was looking over some water-colour drawings, which were evidently the production of Miranda's pencil. And her kindly old face was illumined by a smile of pride at their excellence.

It was a pleasant scene of domestic peace.

Hesba crept away with a full heart, blessing the girl whom she had wronged, but who had brought so much happiness to those so dear to her.

CHAPTER XL.

Oh, think what anxious moments pass between
The birth of plots and their last fatal periods.

It would be impossible to describe the whirlwind of conflicting emotion which raged in Frank Leslie's heart during the remainder of his interview with Hesba Chepstow.

Disappointed love, broken hopes, mad anger, reigned by turns. Nor could he muster sufficient self-control to evoke order from the chaos. Night brought no respite to his troubled brain, and he tossed and turned in his restless bed until the first beams of another day tinged the eastern horizon. Then, thoroughly exhausted, his weary eyes closed and he slumbered long and soundly until the sun was high in the heavens.

He awoke much refreshed, and his mind sufficiently calm for sustained thought.

As he made his toilet his thoughts were engrossed in solving the problem—to him little short of marvellous—of the change in the woman he loved.

Far removed as he was from being a vain man, Frank, like most handsome, clever fellows, was by no means unaware of his advantages. He knew that he had a handsome face and a fine form, and was a personable man in a lady's eyes. He knew that his intellectual powers were above the average; that he was a fluent conversationalist, and that his manners were those of a gentleman. And he was well aware that in all these respects his brother Simon, instead of being above the average of humanity, fell most decidedly below it. Ugly, clumsy, ignorant, overbearing, boorish in his manners and insolent in his converse, there was probably no human being but his father who viewed Simon with complacency.

Thus mentally comparing his brother with himself Frank felt that he could have addressed his fickle love in terms similar to those with which the Prince of Denmark reproved his inconstant mother when her love declined from "Hyperion to a Satyr."

But he found no explanation for such a change in Miranda's case. It was not as though she had been brought up a recluse, seldom seeing men. In the Indian society amidst which her earlier life had been passed the young civilians and military men were a decidedly superior class, as a ruling order amongst a conquered race is almost sure to be. Good-looking, well-educated, well-mannered, no such churls as Simon Dawson could be found amongst their number.

Why then had his brother found favour in the girl's eyes? There must have been some hidden cause for the phenomenon—something beyond the range of Frank's knowledge or ken. To solve this problem was his first duty, and he determined that no means of doing it should be left untried.

Full of this resolution his first object was to seek his father and brother and endeavour to extract from them the secret of Simon's success.

After making a hasty breakfast he threw himself into a hansom and was soon bowling rapidly eastward, en route for Bevis Marks.

When he reached his father's office he was greeted with joyous acclamations by the clerks in the outer rooms. Neither his father nor Simon had yet arrived, and after a kindly greeting to each of the men whom he knew Frank retired into the waiting-room adjacent to his father's sanctum, and taking up the "Times" was soon deep in the Indian news, which still possessed much interest for him.

The door leading to his father's office was slightly ajar, and presently Frank became conscious of voices in that room. They were those of old Dawson and Simon, who had evidently entered the room by the private door from the street, and not having passed the clerks' office had not been apprised that Frank was waiting for them.

"Things are looking up a bit," said the harsh voice of the old man. "There was great need of it. You think our new scheme is safe, Simon?"

"Not a doubt of it," responded the younger man.

"It is the most hazardous job we have ever embarked in, Simon."

"Don't see that!"

"Well, on every previous occasion we have had human heads and human hands to carry out our plans. If a ship had to be scuttled a trustworthy man with a good anger would choose the time and place to let the water in. Now we are at the mercy of an irresponsible piece of machinery. A hitch in this infernal clockwork would mean ruin, perhaps transportation for you and for me."

The young man gave an impatient exclamation.

"There will be no hitch. Have we not experimented with the machine and known that its action is as sure as fate? Rest easy. No plank of the Albatross, no living soul of her crew will ever be wafted to shore!"

Frank, seated alone in his room, listened with breathless interest. He had often suspected his father of crime in the old times. But here was a purposed iniquity greater than he could have imagined.

"Are the bills of lading all right, Simon?" said the old man, presently.

"Yes," was the response.

"The contents of the boxes all entered as uncut jewels?"

"Uncut jewels and manufactured jewellery, it was better so."

"And the amount?"

"Seventy thousand pounds," was the reply.

"And the Albatross sails?"

"This morning. She has weighed anchor ere this."

"When were the machines set to explode?"

"Four days. The Albatross will be in mid-ocean then."

"Good," said the old man. "I do not see how the scheme can fail."

And Frank could hear his father rubbing his hands and cracking his joints in the manner peculiar to him when satisfied.

There was an interval of silence, broken by Simon.

"By the way, I see the captain's name is Chepstow. What Chepstow is that?"

"Brother of the girl you used to dangle after."

"I wonder he took command of one of our ships," said Simon.

"You must remember it is not our ship, at least not ostensibly. Can you suppose I should be fool enough to arrange for the accident to take place in one of our ships? The Albatross is supposed to belong to old Benjamin Marks."

"I am devilish glad Chepstow is in it. I hate them. He's booked for a speedy berth in kingdom come. By the way, before we begin our daily business will it not be well to call on Solomon Moss about the consignment of the other cases?"

The old man assented, and presently Frank heard them both leave the inner office by the same way by which they entered.

The young man's face wore a horror-stricken expression. His countenance was deadly pale, and his brow covered with cold perspiration.

Here was a confirmation of his worst suspicions. His father and brother were murderers in intention, and would become so in fact unless by an almost providential interposition. And had not Providence, perchance, led his steps thither that morning in order that he might become that agent?

He caught up the "Times" and ran his eye rapidly over the shipping list.

Yes, the Albatross was to sail that morning and was undoubtedly by that time free of the river and in the open sea.

Frank was well acquainted with the shipping business, and knew that the time for telegraphing was over. His resolution was quickly taken. He would save this doomed captain and crew if it were possible for man to do so.

He quitted the room and passed rapidly through the outer office, telling the principal clerk as he did so that his father and brother had been in but had gone out again.

On reaching the street he hailed the first hansom which he encountered and soon was making his way rapidly towards the docks.

CHAPTER XLII.

Upon the gale she stooped her side
And bounded o'er the swelling tide.

FRANK LESLIE's resolution was taken. At any cost he would strive to save his father's destined victims from inevitable death. But how was this to be achieved? The Albatross was already on the blue Atlantic beyond any summons or message of his.

But one means presented itself to the young man's mind. That was, to charter the swiftest steam yacht he could find to let and follow the Albatross. By inquiry at Lloyds, he found that the vessel was old, hence the captain was hardly likely to crowd sail upon her, and if only he could get in her track he might hope to come up with her before the catastrophe occurred.

He found on searching the docks that the Albatross had sailed at the appointed time. He was very fortunate in his other quest, being speedily informed of a small screw yacht which had just returned from a pleasure voyage and which he could at once charter, the captain and crew complete.

The Seaweed was well found in all stores, was noted for her fleetness, and could start at any moment.

The bargain was soon concluded. Re-entering his cab, Frank was rapidly driven to his hotel for his cheque-book and other necessaries, and in the afternoon of the same day found himself steaming out of the estuary of the Thames in the smart little steamer.

Following the course the captain considered would probably be that of an outward-going vessel bound for the destination of the Albatross, they steamed steadily onward.

During all the ensuing night the strictest watch was kept on board the Seaweed for lights. But none were seen.

The next sped on. But although they met or passed many vessels homeward or outward bound no Albatross met their view.

At nightfall Frank's anxiety reached fever-heat.

"We must have missed her," he said, in accents of profound vexation.

"That does not follow," replied Captain Simpson.

"Why, surely this swift little craft would have overtaken her ere this," pursued Frank.

"Do not be too sure of that, my dear Mr. Leslie," responded the captain. "Look at that wind!" and he pointed as he spoke to their light topsails bellying in the gale. "Remember, the Albatross had the start of us, and she has had this wind astern ever since. Under a press of canvas her progress would be well nigh as swift as if aided by steam. Do not despair yet."

Frank tried to console himself with the well-meant arguments. But his anxiety was so great that he did not seek his berth that night.

The next day passed without success. No sign of the Albatross was discovered.

With the dawn of the fourth day Frank's fears and anxiety became unendurable.

"Surely," he said, "we must have passed her now."

"Yes," said Captain Simpson, "I think we have."

"What course would you recommend?" queried Frank.

"That we lie to and await her coming," said the captain, "it is our only chance."

"A slender one," exclaimed Frank, with a groan.

"This will be our best plan," went on Captain Simpson. "It is almost certain that no vessel bound in her direction would get in more southerly latitude than that where we now are. We have three boats, let us leave one with a small crew here, another two miles to the north of this place, another two miles to the north of that, while the Seamew herself can be hove to four miles to the north of the last boat. We shall thus command a zone of twelve miles. The wind is sunk; the Albatross's progress must be slow. It will be easy to hail her by the trumpet, or even come up with her in the boat."

The captain's scheme seemed the best practicable under the circumstances, and it was put in effect, Frank Leslie taking command of one of the boats.

The slow-passing morning was a time of torture to the young man. The sun climed the heavens higher and higher as the hour of noon was reached, then began his descent to his watery bed, and Leslie, sick at heart, relinquished hope; doubtless all was over before this.

Presently he was roused from his bitter reflections by the cry of

"Sail, ho!"

He turned his eyes eagerly in the direction of the sailor's indicating finger, and saw astern upon the horizon a vessel following in their wake under full canvas. He seized the glass and examined her eagerly.

She was a full-rigged barque, with all canvas set, although it was idly flapping against the masts.

In overpowering excitement Frank turned the glass to her bows.

It was she!

Under her bowsprit he could make out the gilded effigy of the gigantic sea-bird from which she took her name.

The sea was like glass. They had nothing now to do but await her coming. Her progress was slow, but presently she arrived within hailing distance.

One of the sailors waved a flag to attract attention, while Frank, taking the speaking-trumpet, shouted across the waters:

"The Albatross ahoy?"

An answering hail came back, and in a few moments the Seamew's boat was beside the Albatross, and Frank Leslie stepped upon her deck.

Charles Chepstow came forward to meet him with a look of considerable surprise on his face.

"Captain Chepstow?" said Frank.

The other answered in the affirmative.

"Pray excuse brevity," continued Frank. "The matter is one of life and death. You have some packets of jewellery on board?"

"Yes," answered Chepstow, wonderingly.

"Said to be so, and so entered in the manifest, doubtless. But goods of a very different character. By mere chance I discovered on the morning on which you sailed that they were infernal machines, timed to explode on the fourth day after sailing. I at once followed you in yonder yacht, but we must have passed you under shadow of night. Quick! there is not a moment to be lost. Hurl these accursed packages to the depth of the ocean, or when the hour arrives there will not be a plank left floating of the Albatross."

"My dear sir," said Chepstow, with a dazed, stanched expression, "I dare not consign valuable freight to the fishes in this reckless manner. What authority have I but yours, a

stranger, and what interest have you in the matter?"

Frank gave a deep groan.

"The interest?" he cried. "Alas! that I am near a-kin to the murderous concoctors of the scheme. Let me at least see these packages."

Chepstow led the way down into his own cabin, where on the floor at one end were piled up a dozen strong, neatly-made boxes secured by stout iron bands.

Leslie knelt beside them and applied his ear to the top one. Then he rose to his feet, his face pale as death.

"Listen there," he cried, "and judge for yourself."

Chepstow did as he was bidden and it turned his bronzed face pale.

A curious, stridulous ticking, as from a well-stocked clockmaker's shop, met his ear.

Each of the boxes had its own little incessant chirrup.

Chepstow knew that boxes of jewellery should give forth no such voice.

"By Jove!" he said, staring at Frank, blankly, "you are right."

"Hesitate not a moment, man!" shouted Leslie. "Our lives may depend upon our promptness."

And, seizing one of the boxes, he rushed up the ladder to the deck.

After a moment's indecision Chepstow followed with another.

Just then a breeze sprang up, the sails filled, and the Albatross moved rapidly forward.

Leslie stood looking over the bulwarks towards the spot where the box had disappeared.

Just at that moment a concussion took place which shook air and sea. A mountain of water was thrown upward. The Albatross reeled to the larboard till her yards dipped into the sea, then whirled madly round and round as if in a whirlpool.

Half-blinded by the deluge of spray Leslie yet retained his presence of mind and rushed to the cabin ladder, shouting as he did so to some of the sailors:

"Bear a hand, lads. It is life or death with us."

Meanwhile Chepstow had thrown the box he carried overboard, and in the space of a few seconds the cabin was cleared of the dozen packages.

No other exploded dangerously near the Albatross, but as she forged ahead continuous explosions astern and masses of water hurled skyward evinced how well the maker of the internal machines had carried out his purpose.

(To be Continued.)

FACETIAE.

CONDITION.

DRILL SERGEANT (to recruit): "Throw out your chest and keep in your stomach. A soldier should always have a full chest and an empty stomach."

Punch.

"NONE of the county gentlemen speak to him now," said our Mrs. Rausbotham, "because he's a velocipede." "A what?" we asked. "A velocipede," replied the lady, "a person who goes about shooting foxes, you know."

Punch.

THE MATERIAL OF MATERIALISM.—Dynamite.

Punch.

QUALIFYING A SWEEPING ASSERTION.

SOPHIE (after hearing about Frank): "I declare I shall not believe a word a man says to me. They're all liars!"

BEATRICE: "For shame, Sophie!"

SOPHIE (regretfully): "At least all the nice ones are!"

Punch.

LADY HARBERTON'S CRY ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE FASHIONABLE CROWD.—"Divide! Divide!"

Punch.

NEW PROVERB FOR THE RECENT MILD WEATHER.—"One swallow does not make a Christmas!"

Punch.

LADIES complain of the difficulty of walking gracefully in the divided skirt. Can there be more stability as a lasting fashion for a divided skirt than for a divided house? But let that pass. Give it a locus standi. We have had the "Alexandra Limp," the "Grecian Bend," and "Tie-back Totter"—why not have the "Harbor-ton Hobble"?

Punch.

AUCTION-ROOM NYMPHS.—Hammer-dryads.

Punch.

HOW HE SETTLED IT.

"LADIES complain"—began an elderly match-making mother to an unconfirmed bachelor. "They've no right to come plain," interrupted one Mister Wagstaffe; "they should come pretty." So he gave a bachelor's ball and a lass-hopper's feast, and there was no further complaining.

Punch.

GETTING HIS ANSWER.

YOUNG TOMPKINS (thinking to take a rise out of Pat): "Why, you've got that paper upside down, Daddy."

PAT: "Bedad! any fule cud rade it the other way oop!"

[Calmly goes on with his reading.]

Moonshine.

EMPHATIC.

NURSE: "Here's your medicine, Johnny"—(Johnny swallows it)—"Now say 'Thank you.'"

JOHNNY: "No, I'm blowed if I do!"

Moonshine.

"Boys will be boys." But we should like to ask when?

Moonshine.

A BROWN STUDY.—Puzzled what to do with the last penny.

Moonshine.

A TOTAL WRECK.—A confirmed rake.

Moonshine.

A REFRESHMENT BAR.—The want of money.

Moonshine.

A WIND INSTRUMENT.—The Storm Drum.

Moonshine.

TAUT"-OLOGICAL.

FOND MOTHER (who has been teaching): "Now, Augustus, and what is tautology?"

AUGUSTUS (making a dash for it): "Any ology that's 'taut.'" Judy.

ONE FOR MISSUS.

MISTRESS: "Bridget, I really can't allow you to receive your sweetheart in the kitchen any longer."

BRIDGET: "Thank you kindly, mum, but he's too bashful in the parlour." Judy.

RADICAL WHEEZE.

(Let us give him a chance, this once.)

"WHAT'S the difference, pa, between the Upper House and the Lower House?"

"The difference, my dear, is this: the Lower House means a-bility, the Upper House no-bility."

Judy.

HAVE "PATIENCE."

No wonder the electric light now goes on swimmingly at the Savoy. Each lamp there is a "Swan."

Fun.

AN AQUATIC QUERY.

Do river carmen obtain their "feathers" from the "bed" of the stream?

Fun.

A REVOLUTION in Ireland that the most enthusiastic patriot does not appreciate.—The treadmill.

Fun.

A HINT WELL WRAPPED.

CIGARS being, as we know, composed of the foliage of the tobacco-plant dried and rolled, it is evident that when a host offers them to his guests it implies a wish that they should take their leaves.

Fun.

KING SOLOMON's advice to the ne'er-do-well was to "go to the ant." Nowadays, acting in the spirit if not the letter of the proverbist, the ne'er-do-well goes to his "uncle."

Fun.

COAL MERCHANT: "These are 24s. the ton, or eighteenpence the hundred."

INEXPERIENCED WIFE: "Dear me, that seems very cheap, and such nice large lumps too! You may send me a thousand of those, please."

Moonshine.

DISPENSE—To make up medicine. Dispense—To do without.—(Vide dictionary.)

BOY: "Mother's sent this physic back, it ain't here."

ASSISTANT: "Why is it not for her?"

BOY: "'Cos it's got the wrong name on it."

ASSISTANT: "Oh, is that all? That is soon altered."

Moonshine.

WILL "GO" SPLENDIDLY WITH THE PUBLIC.

It is contemplated to construct tricycles to go by electricity. Of course they will be called "Electricycles."

Funny Folks.

A WELCOME WINTER RESORT.—Warm-inster.

Funny Folks.

"PAMPA'D MENIALS."—Servants in South America.

Funny Folks.

A DOWN-Y PARTY.—The eider-duck.

Funny Folks.

THE BURGLAR TO HIS ARRESTED "PAL."—Are you often taken like this?"

Funny Folks.

THE INNOCENT AT THE CATTLE SHOW.

(And what he wants to know you know.) Isn't it the correct thing to visit the Show in a showful?

Are not the "cross breeds" of cattle the most dangerous?

Are all the milch cows of the same (m)ilk, or are some of them the cream of their species? And if so, are any of them creamer than udders?

Doesn't it take (c)old cows to yield cold cream and cream ice? And isn't chocolate cream given by dun cows?

Do the milch cows have to look calfter their own progeny?

Isn't the bellow-dious performance of cattle executed upon their own horns? and do not the cows "low" with the object of indicating their lowality to their young?

Are not the "polled" cattle those elected for prizes?

Isn't "half a bull" (i.e., slang for half a crown) derived from pecunia (money) out of pecus (cattle)?

Is "we'ther mutton" more liable to change than other kinds? And wouldn't cold we'ther mutton be a seasonable winter dish?

Is pig-tending a congenial hog-upation? and do the porcine pets live sow-ciably together?

Would a pig buyer with a "stye in his eye" be very offended at the offer of a card for the Ophthalmic Hospital?

Is the heifer show this year as good as heifer was, or how?

Do the fat exhibits' pedigrees add to their pedigree-ness?

Isn't the much advertised "beef wine" a description of bull 'ock, prepared from the fruit of the bo-wine?

Isn't the chief prize ox the real bos' of this show?

Funny Folks.

widely diversified region of Shropshire lying contiguous to the Welsh Marches of Radnor and Montgomery. There are hills and dales, purling brooks and leaping cascades, wide-reaching fells, dotted and seamed with ponds, lakelets and canals, while as background to the whole the Salop heights, with Iron Mountain near the centre of the range, lift their wooded crests and rugged peaks against the changeful sky, in other times a barrier to the incursions of the once war-loving and marauding Welshmen.

Standing upon the mountain side, looking eastward, the eye takes in a broad sweep of territory, comprising two populous and wealthy boroughs.

Upon the right hand, before us, and stretching away to the southward, lies Mendonbury, the seat of the Marquis of Mendon.

Somewhere about the middle of the fifteenth century Henry VI., bearing much love towards Sir Robert Graham, a powerful knight of his court, and reposing especial confidence in his loyalty and prowess, created him Lord and Governor of the Welsh Marches, with the title of Marquis, at the same time bestowing upon him, for himself and his heirs for ever, one of the fairest and richest domains in Western England.

In course of time the original powers and prerogatives of the Lords of the Marches were to become greatly curtailed and modified; yet the broad estate first granted to Sir Robert Graham, with all its income and emoluments, and the high peerage thereto belonging, had remained in the family intact, with no lack of a son to inherit to the present day.

Close below us, as we stand upon the mountain's slope, lies Mendon Castle, one of the largest and best appointed private residences in the realm. The old keep, with court and massive walls, and moat, and barbican, stands but little changed from what it was three centuries ago. The new dwelling, so constructed as to form, with the original, a complete and harmonious whole, might be called a palace, for it is palatial in every sense, both outside and in. It was planned and erected by those who had architectural taste and judgment, with no need to study economy in cost.

Beyond the castle, and upon either hand, stretch garden, lawn, and park, while beyond those lies the town—a populous settlement, with its excellent inn, school-house, and church, shops of traders and artisans, while flanking all, on every hand, are the numerous productive farms of a thrifty and well-contented tenantry. Or they have been well content in times gone by, though there be some in this present who begin to shake their heads, mysteriously whispering that trouble is brewing. If there is trouble, however, we shall be likely to find it.

Look now to the left hand, distant to the northward, four miles or thereabouts, and we see another settlement. This is Waldrone Fells, so called, and is the property of a wealthy mining baronet, Sir Peter Waldrone. Originally the place bore a Welsh name, but it had offered such a puzzle of pronunciation for English tongues that the grandfather of the present master had given to it its present cognomen. It did not matter that there were more of hills and crags than there were of fells; the significance and the euphony of the verbal combination had tickled the old baronet's ear, and Waldrone Fells it had been from that day. There was no castle here, but Waldrone Hall was a noble structure, nevertheless, ranking even with the Gothic church in its proportions and prominence.

Sir Peter owned coal mines and iron mines, and moreover he hired and worked the mines belonging to the estate of Mendon. In truth, no marquis had troubled himself with the bother and drudgery of mining for ages; nor was there need. The return by renting was sufficient.

It was a clear, cold day of February, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and thirty-two. Lord John Graham, fourteenth Marquis of Mendon, had been helped from his bed to a great easy-chair, and had caused his valet to make him presentable, for he had sum-

moned a visitor. He was sixty years of age; his frame more shattered and shaken by the life he had led than by those simple threescore years, for truly his parents had entailed upon him a constitution which, with proper living, ought to have been in its prime at that age. However, there he was, bent and broken, and feeling the hand of dissolution upon him. Once he must have been handsome, and that body, now so weak, had been one of the strongest and most active in the realm. There was pride, plenty of it still left, though the intellect was not what it had been.

There were two other men in the great vaulted chamber. The one who stood nearest to him was his son and heir, Roderic, a man of thirty years, of ordinary height, possessing a frame that must once have been muscular and strong and compact, but something had sadly broken and shattered it, and left signs of decay where should have been health and vigour. The shoulders, now slightly stooping, were square and broad, the head rather under-sized, the features good, the complexion dark, the black, close-growing beard being so heavy as to show plainly on the fresh-shaven cheeks, while the crisp, coarse hair, of the same raven hue, curled in close, uncompromising ringlets. He wore a pair of neatly trimmed whiskers, which, after the fashion of the times, were pointed at the corners of the mouth.

Taken all in all Roderic Graham, by courtesy Lord Wolfam, was a good-looking man. He dressed well—his valet had good taste—and he knew how to act the gentleman. It did not require a close observer, however, to discover that he was given somewhat to dissipation. His face showed that but too plainly.

The third man showed a striking contrast to his companion—for we may call him and Lord Wolfam companions. He was tall—very nearly six feet—with a form which, for its grace and symmetry, could not be excelled. Though not stout he was yet muscular and compact, his motions betraying that self-poise and confidence which only come of physical prowess. His face was after the style of the Apollo Belvidere—classically beautiful; his eyes large, limpid and lustrous, of a clear, ethereal blue; while the hair, of a rich auburn hue, hung in poetic curls about his white neck and temples. His garb was purely military, though a modest undress in style; and its fit, even to the tie of the cravat, might have excited the envy of the fastidious Beau Brummel himself.

Such was the man who called himself Colonel James Fitz Eustace. He might have been five-and-thirty years of age—perhaps a trifle over that—but he had no need yet to hide his years. He had made his appearance in that section of country only a fortnight previous to the time of which we write, bringing with him letters of introduction from some of the first men in London. He had a letter from the Duke of Wellington, avouching for his military probity and honour; one from Lord Napier; and he had one also written to him by the king when Duke of Clarence. This latter he was especially fond of showing. It was written in a rellicking, merry humour at Epsom, and originally enclosed a cheque for a hundred pounds, borrowed by William from the colonel for betting purposes.

"My lord," said the son as he led his friend to his father, "this is Colonel Fitz Eustace, of whom I have spoken, and whom, you will remember, you kindly asked to see."

The old marquis put forth a wasted hand and said he was glad to see the friend of his son.

A slight pause and the visitor returned:

"Any man may well thank the good fortune that throws him into the companionship of Lord Wolfam; yet, noble sir, I think my visit to this part of the kingdom was more directly owing to my desire to see and know yourself than to anything else under the sun. Do you know, my lord, I had the pleasure of listening to the speech you made in the Chamber of Peers a year ago, when you so powerfully opposed the wild project of interfering with slavery in our trans-Atlantic colonies?"

"Yes—yes," said the old man, rather dubi-

BELLA'S HERO:

A STORY OF
THE WELSH MARCHES.

CHAPTER I.

MENDON CASTLE: A LIFE-STORY.

The scene to which we invite the reader is one of the wildest and at the same time one of the most beautiful in England, it being that

ously, "I remember I did speak against it. Wilberforce had offended me. But, do you know, sir, I was never proud of that effort? If I am in my seat when the bill comes up, as I am sure it will, I shall vote for it."

The colonel laughed good-humouredly, and declared that he should do the same.

But the marquis did not seem inclined to continue the conversation, and Fitz Eustace, who could take a hint very quickly, withdrew to another part of the room, which enabled the old man to speak apart with his son, which he had manifested a strong desire to do.

"Roderic, is young Conway in the place now—with his mother?"

"He is."

"I wish to see him. Will you send him to me? Let him come to-day, if he can."

"I will attend to it at once, my lord; and I have no doubt that he will be with you very soon."

As the son turned away, the marquis, seeming to feel that he had dismissed the visitor somewhat abruptly, called to him and said:

"Colonel, you must excuse me from sharing in your entertainment, as you can see for yourself that I am not strong; but you need not fear to call on my son. I can only bid you welcome to Mendon, and leave it for Lord Wolfam to make you comfortable."

Fitz Eustace was warm and ardent in his thanks, careful not to overdo, but as profuse as politeness and good taste would warrant.

"I know not how long the powers that be will allow me to profit by your kindness, my lord," he said, in conclusion; "but you will permit me to hope—aye, even to pray—that I may see you in the saddle before I go."

The marquis shook his head with a dubious smile of thanks, and the colonel left, Wolfam following close upon his heels.

The first act of the latter, on reaching the lower hall, was to find a proper servant for the mission, whom he directed to hasten at once to the dwelling of the Widow Conway, and find her son George, and to inform him that the marquis earnestly desired to see him at once.

This done, Roderic repaired to his own suite of apartments, accompanied by his friend, where, seated in his cosily furnished sanctum, he summoned servant to brew for them a bowl of punch—a proceeding which met with the colonel's hearty approval.

When the punch was steaming on the table, and pipes and tobacco had been furnished, and the servant had withdrawn, the twain gave themselves to enjoyment. A keen observer, however, would not have failed to notice that Fitz Eustace was preoccupied.

Evidently there was a subject on his mind which he wished to broach; but he waited his opportunity; and his opportunity, as he calculated, was when Lord Wolfam should have drunk enough of the strong, generous punch to warm his heart and loosen his tongue. And the time was not long in coming.

He critically noted his host's varying humour, and when he saw the head thrown back, and heard the mellow laugh, with a thump on the table, and a merry toast proposed, he ventured the onset.

"Ah!—by the way, Wolfam—speaking of the service in India, reminds me of a subject that has interested me. Young Conway has lately returned from India, has he not?"

"Yes. He came little more than a month ago. It may have been the last of December."

"What sort of a fellow is he?"

"How do you mean?"

"Why, what is he? What does he do? What are his antecedents? Ha! ha! isn't that the proper way to put it?"

"Exactly, colonel. And—here's a health to the bright-eyed Kate of the Fella."

"Good! I'm with you there. To the bright-eyed Kate! Bless her!"

The colonel tossed off the punch, then beat a bar of the tattoo upon the table with the bottom of his glass, and then:

"Your punch is capital, my lord. We were speaking of George Conway. I wish you'd tell me what you know of him."

"Has he crossed your track, colonel?"

"No, not at all."

"Then why are you so interested in him?"

Wolfam did not question from any disposition to refuse an answer to his friend, but from a mere spirit of bantering, with, mayhap, a grain of curiosity intermixed.

"I'll tell you, my dear Roderic," said Fitz Eustace, soberly. "I have a strong fancy that the young fellow is casting longing glances at the sister of our bright-eyed Kate."

"What?" cried the other, with a start. "Do you mean that?—that he is looking up to Bella Waldron?"

"It looks very much like it."

"Hi! I wish he would take her. Do you know, the old baronet has been trying to draw me into that market? He has, 'pon honour."

"Well, Wolfam, I must say I think you are blind to your interests if you do not accept. Look at it: the handsomest girl in the county, isn't she?"

"With one exception—yes."

"Eh? Who's the exception?"

"That, my boy, is a secret profound."

"Honest?"

"Yes."

"Then let the girls go. I may be mistaken about the looking to Bellin that I spoke of, though I have seen one or two things that had a strong leaning in evidence of it. And now about the youth himself."

"A very few words will tell you the whole story, Fitz. George Conway is the son and only child of his widowed mother, and she has been a tenant of ours since her husband's death, sixteen years ago. At the age of ten years he went to India with my mother's brother, Colonel Charles Lancaster—"

"Lancaster!" cried Fitz Eustace, clapping his hands joyously. "Colonel Charles Lancaster! Bless his jolly old soul! I know him well. I want to know if he is your uncle?"

"Yes."

"Well, I declare. New ties of friendship come up between us from every field. Good! Let's drink to the colonel!"

They drank, and then Roderic proceeded:

"As I was saying: twelve years ago when my Uncle Charles was ready to start for the Indies, and had made arrangements for taking my brother Arthur with him, he—Arthur—asked that his dear friend and playmate might go with him. Lancaster saw George Conway, then a stout, rugged, handsome boy, and thought he could make use of him. My father, too, was pleased with the idea. If it would tend to make Arthur happier he would pay any expense that might accrue. But the colonel would listen to nothing of that kind. When Mrs. Conway had given her consent, Uncle Charles took him willingly. And thus, you see, George Conway and my brother Arthur—Lord Allerton—went out to India together, where Arthur has remained ever since; but Conway has been at home twice. He was here for a few weeks three years ago; and now he is here again."

"Further, my dear colonel: touching the young fellow's character and capacity, I can only tell you what my uncle writes. He has entered the army; has already gained the rank of captain of a troop of light dragoons. Lancaster pronounces him the best horseman and best swordsman of his age in India; and he says that he is respected and beloved by all who know him.

"There, sir! There you have it, just as it came to me. What more can you ask of the youth? But, if the poor fellow should, in sober earnest, lift his aspirations to Miss Bella Waldron, I fear me he will find Sir Peter after him with a vengeance. Nothing short of an earl will answer the sum of his requirements in the candidate for his daughter's hand—that is—the youngest. As for Kate, she may not be so easy to dispose of, as witness her five-and-twenty years, already, and not an—"

"Hold! No more of that! I'll champion Kate."

"Ah! Then not another word. She is an angel."

"Good. But you were speaking of your brother Arthur. Would it be asking too much to ask how it came to pass that he was sent so far away from home at that tender age?"

Ordinarily, Roderic would have put the man off most summarily who had ventured upon such a question; but the hot, strong punch had not only limbered his tongue but it had stolen away half his sense, and he told a family secret to this man which, sober, he would not have told to his king.

"Not at all," he said, swallowing the last of the punch and lighting a pipe. "But, my boy, you'll keep this to yourself."

Solemn promises were given, and Roderic Graham went on:

"As you are aware, I am eight years older than is Arthur. Our mother was not a strong woman, and she came very near to dying when I was born—near to giving her life for me. My father, who never seemed to really love anything else, save himself, literally worshipped that woman. He loved her with all his heart and all his strength. The ghostly price which was so nearly paid for my life was paid for Arthur's!"

"Our mother survived his birth only a few hours. Our father was frantic. He looked at the tiny bit of humanity, gasping and shrieking on the white pillow—a mere speck of creation, without sense or sight, and almost without form—he looked upon it, and thought that for this he had been called to give his idol. He looked once more—looked at the tiny, quivering, screeching thing—and then looked upon the death-cold face of his beloved—and his heart was steeled against the little stranger. From that moment he almost hated the child of his loins that had cost him his wife."

"Years went by, and that first impulse of hatred did not abate. Really, the presence of the child had become a torture to him; and he more than once threatened to give him away into the care of a distant nurse, where he might never see him more. At length, when the boy was ten years old, Uncle Charles offered to take him. And you know the rest."

"I know that he went to India, and that he there remains."

"Well, that is all that I know."

And then Colonel Fitz Eustace bowed his head in thought. A deep plot was shaping itself in his mind.

CHAPTER II.

WHAT DOES HE MEAN?—A HORROR!

Now more than an hour had elapsed from the departure of Lord Wolfam from his father's chamber when a servant announced to the marquis that George Conway was in waiting. The order for his speedy admission was given at once.

As the young man entered and approached the centre of the room Lord Mendon regarded him with varied emotions. He was a handsome youth surely; and we shall not wonder that the face of the marquis took a softer look, and that from beneath the shaggy, overhanging brows a warmer light shone forth as he gazed. He saw a man of two or three and twenty, of medium height and size, and of a form that was simply perfect—the perfection of manly outline, and a perfection of manly strength and vigour. There

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might have been men of the same bulk possessing more brute force, but, if there could be a lack in this direction, it was more than made up in grace, and ease, and dexterity of motion. As we have heard from report of one who knew him well, he was accounted the best swordsman of his age in India; and that quality of substance and essence—of body and spirit—which made him this also rendered him master of all the physical graces and accomplishments that became the true man.

His splendidly-formed head was covered with a silvery profusion of flaxen curls, and his eyes, from which were reflected a truth and sincerity of soul not to be doubted, were of a pure, liquid blue, with a light deep and fervent. He had left off his military garb, and was clad in a simple country attire, such as might become a gentleman of his age and station.

As the old man gazed his eyes grew moist, and a strong emotion shook his frame. He put forth his hand and spoke.

"George, I am glad to see you. I thank you for coming to me."

The youth took the feeble hand and carried it to his lips.

"Oh, my lord, I promised Arthur I would see you if I could. He will be glad when he knows. But, ah! he will sorrow when I tell him that I found you so far from well."

"Sit down—sit down, my son. I want to talk with you of Arthur. And, look you, I want you to tell me truly."

"Oh, sir!" the youth cried, impulsively, "it will give me joy to tell you the truth of your boy. Do you know, sir, that in all the world you are his dearest thought? He loves you—"

"Stop, stop! Love me, say you? Ah, that cannot be. What have I given him to love me for?"

"You gave him life. You have allowed him to bear an honoured name. And, my lord, he believes that somewhere in your heart there is a little corner given to love of himself. He tries to think so."

"Ay, and it is so. Look into my face, boy. Listen, I do love him! Do you believe me?"

"So truly do I believe that I would kiss you for Heaven."

The youth rose and bent over the old man, with an arm around his neck, and imprinted a kiss upon his cheek.

"Oh! how Arthur's heart will swell when I tell him of this hour."

"Now, George, sit thee down again and tell me of my boy. What has he studied? What has he done? Lancaster has never written of him—never a line, only to tell me that he was alive and well. Tell me of him."

The old man fairly shook with eagerness. The feeling was strange to his bosom, and now that he had given it a place it came near to overpowering him.

The memory of his treatment of his boy in the years that were past bore upon him heavily; and only he himself knew how utterly his heart had been shut against his youngest, his babe; and in proportion as he had been cold and unloving was he now ardent and loving when once the current of emotion had set that way. It would almost seem that the love he had once borne his wife, which had lain dead so long, had been breathed into life again and given to his far-away boy. And a dead love revived, revived in a heart old and seared, becomes a passion deep and strong. And so it was now with the Lord of Mendon.

"Tell me of my boy. Is he as strong as you are?"

"Yes, my lord."

"Is he as handsome?"

"I will not say that he is handsomer, sir, though you might say so were you to see him; but he is as handsome and as good as can be. Let me tell you what General Lancaster said, for you know, your old friend is a general now."

And then he went on and told what the old officer had said of his nephew; and the marquis in his deep intensity of feeling took the youth's

hand in his own and held it there while the story was being told.

George Conway spent an hour with the old man, and before he left promised that he would come again, that he would come often, and talk with him of his boy.

The visitor had arisen, and, as he supposed, had spoken the last adieu for the day, with his hand upon the latch of the door, when the marquis called for him to stay.

"Hold! Come back. Come hither, boy. Give me your hand."

Wondering, the youth returned and extended his hand, which Mendon grasped spasmodically.

"George, I had planned to have Lord Wolfam write. I sent for you that I might know if Arthur loved me—if he would come gladly—and then I meant to tell Roderic to write. But I will not have it so. He may forget. That colonel— I don't like him! I don't like his looks. He will take up Roderic's attention and I will not trust it so. You shall write. Will you do it?"

"I cannot tell you how gladly, sir. I will write to him at once and tell him to come to you as quickly as he can."

"You will not fail?"

The young man promised, and when he finally took his leave he left the marquis with more of satisfaction in his heart than had been his to enjoy for a long, long time.

As George Conway followed the servant through a broad corridor leading to the central hall he became aware that someone was behind him, and on turning he beheld the man of whom Lord Mendon had spoken so unfavourably—Colonel Fitz Eustace.

He looked at the colonel, but the colonel did not appear to be looking at him, but only following by accident the same course.

The central hall was soon reached, thence down the great stairway to the main hall or entranceway of the palatial dwelling, out to the vestibule upon the broad, vine-clad piazza, where his conductor politely touched his forehead with the back of his hand in true military style and bade him adieu.

George had stepped down upon the solid pavement of the carriage-way and was looking the way which he would go when he heard his name called, and on turning he beheld Colonel Fitz Eustace approaching from the direction of the stables.

"My dear young sir, I hope I do not trespass?"

And as the man advanced and extended his hand no one would have suspected that he had just come from drinking his moiety of a full bowl of strong punch. But he had left his companion of the bout not quite so presentable.

"Did you wish to speak with me, sir?" asked George.

He gave his hand, but not cordially. There was something about the man which he did not like.

And here we may remark upon a subject which though very old must ever be one of interest and worth consideration. Did you ever, dear reader, meet a man for the first time whose presence struck a chill to your inner sense? The moment your eyes rested upon him you felt a sense of shrinking, an impulse to avoid him, to keep apart from him.

There was in his face, in the whole atmosphere of his personality, a nameless something which impressed you with fear and dread.

That was the first impression of the man, and be sure it was correct. In after time circumstances may have brought you into social relations with that man wherein he has put forth efforts and manifested qualities that have drawn your heart to him in real friendly feeling, and then you may have wondered how you could have been so mistaken in the beginning.

But wait. The end is not yet. Not yet has the man been fully tried. Extraordinary circumstances have favoured him. The time is coming, if you both live, when the evil which first repelled you will make itself manifest in all its horror and deformity.

You were not mistaken. That mysterious

power of interpenetration through which one sees and feels this hidden quality in a stranger is like the attraction of the unseen pole upon the magnetic needle.

Circumstances may slightly vary it, local attractions of counter influence may for a season cause slight deflection, and, moreover, the pole itself has variations of its own, yet the law is fixed and immutable, and we know that the needle points to the north.

So it is with the psychologic power of instantaneous perception. It is an impression made upon the mind, upon the deepest sense, and when it has been clearly made it may be relied upon.

Ay, though in after time circumstances may lead you to forget your fears and prejudices, be sure another time will come when the hidden evil will rise to the surface, and you shall behold the nakedness of the serpent.

George Conway possessed this power of interpenetration to a remarkable degree; and in his far Orient he had found it to serve him more than once. He had met many men who, at first sight, had impressed him unfavourably; but he had never before met one who had affected him as this man had done.

Truly, he was forced to make a strong effort in order to meet the man pleasantly. As he stood now, and looked squarely into the really handsome face, his first thought was, and he spoke it to himself:

"This man is the incarnation of that spirit of evil—that Prince of Darkness—that buys men's souls. Outside he is beautiful and plausible, while inside all is false and diabolic. What can he want with me?"

Colonel Fitz Eustace quickly noticed the youth's restrained manner, but, fortunately for all concerned, he attributed it to a wrong cause. The idea that he was distrusted as a man did not occur to him.

He fancied that the simple country youth—the widow's son—was overcome by the superiority of a grander presence, and it should be his aim to put the lad at his ease.

"Yes, Mr. Conway, if you will permit me to walk by your side, I should like to speak a few words with you. I am not one who makes many acquaintances. In my somewhat extensive intercourse with the world I have found that one or two true friends are a better possession by far than a host of lukewarm and untrustworthy hangers-on. And, my dear boy, let me assure you that any man may find as many of the latter as he can accommodate."

George could not exactly see the point of this, so he only answered by a nod. But he had conferred with himself, and had resolved not to repulse the man.

"Certainly," he thought, "this man would not have taken this trouble to meet me, and would not have offered his company as he has done, if he had not a selfish end in view. And I would like to know what that end can be."

A brief pause, during which the colonel looked off upon the pretty village that lay spread out in the distance before them, then looked at his watch, and then back to the young man whom he sought to interest.

"Upon my soul, tempus fugit wonderfully in this beautiful place. Ha! ha! I am reminded

—But perhaps you would not understand. Yet I must tell you the joke. I once used that phrase in the presence of an old colonel of dragoons, Fitz James by name, who took me up for it. We were in a select company, old habits are strong with me, it is one of my old trifling with words to sometimes Anglicise Latin phrases as I did just now. Ha! ha! I used that same phrase in the colonel's hearing, and he faced about and said to me, with a most comical admixture of pomposity, urbanity, pity, and graciousness, said he:

"Young man, suffer me—ahem!—to enlighten you a bit. I heard you just now attempt to use a Latin phrase. Be careful in the future. The verb, in Latin, does not form its preterit as it does in the English. The 's' you superadded was wholly redundant."

"But the joke of the matter was that the old fellow didn't know that the burst of laughter



["BELLA! BELLA! STRIVE! STRIVE FOR A LITTLE TIME! I AM COMING!"]

which followed was for him. Ha, ha, ha! It was rich, I assure you. You can appreciate it?"

Conway judged it time to hook his fish, and he did so, though it cost him a tremendous effort. He laughed heartily, and professed to think the anecdote sparkling.

A few remarks on the varied scenic beauties before them, and then:

"Ah, you have been in to see the old marquis?"

"Yes."

"You found him up and quite himself?"

"I found him in his great easy-chair, and not worse than I had expected to find him."

"Yes, yes. And—ahem!—he spoke of his younger son?"

"Yes."

"I suppose his chief object in calling you to his presence was to question you about Arthur?"

"Yes, his only object."

"Ah! I thought so. And I suppose he will at once send for the young man to come home?"

This was put with undisguised eagerness, though evidently the man did not know how eager he appeared. George caught the expression of the keen blue eyes, the snake-like gleaming, and he marked the involuntary clutching of the hands. What did it mean? There was a mystery in this which the youth was bent upon solving.

"What his lordship may conclude to do I cannot say, sir," was George's ready answer.

And he added, after a brief pause:

"I should think he would like to see his youngest son once more in the flesh."

"So should I. And I think he will make the effort, don't you?"

"Why, I think I can safely say that I would make it if I were in his place. However, he will doubtless communicate his wishes to his elder son."

"Of course; and I know that Roderic wants his brother to come home. I believe you and

Lord Allerton have been close companions in India?"

"We have been friendly, sir, and have mostly lived beneath the same roof."

"Yes; so you know him thoroughly. Does he usually go by his title of Allerton?"

"On the contrary, he would never have it used if he could help it."

"So, so; he is modest, eh?"

"He is certainly not vainly forward."

"He is healthy and strong?"

"Perfectly so."

And thus the colonel went on pushing his questions until he had gained a full account of Arthur Graham's character, habits and general life.

And Conway had answered frankly, for in all that was asked there was nothing that gave him else than pleasure in the answering. Arthur was his dearest friend—his brother in fact—and since he had only good to tell of him he told it from his heart.

At length Fitz Eustace had apparently exhausted his fund of questions on hand, and having thanked the young man for his kindness he politely lifted his hat, with an "Au revoir," and turned back towards the castle.

The day was crisp and cold, and as Conway found himself alone he pulled the collar of his overcoat up about his ears and hurried on towards home. He had been so long used to a warmer climate that he felt the cold more keenly than did those who were acclimatized by a life-long use.

He walked on, and thought of the man who had just left him. What had that man in view?

"Certainly," said George, speaking his thoughts aloud, "there is a plot working in that busy brain. In the first place: The man is a villain from top to toe—inside and out! And his influence over Lord Wolfam is not for good. What is he here for? I would like to see those letters of his. I'll wager a trifle—I think I would pledge my word—that they are forgeries. I would like to look at the one he says he re-

ceived from the Duke of Clarence. I should know the king's hand. He tells too much. William has been dissipated, I know; but he never associated with those whose characters were bad. And there is Sir Peter. The colonel seems to have fairly captivated him. What end has he in view there? Is it Kate? Ah! I fear me poor Kate might fall a victim to his wiles. But he means more than that. There is something deeper than love-making in that quarter, or I am deceived. I think I will speak with Bella. She cannot be deceived by such a man. Bella! Bella! Oh! will she ever——"

He did not finish the sentence. His Bella was nearer than he thought.

Taking its rise in the rugged heights beyond the castle was a stream called Mendon River, which, swollen by late thaws and storms of January, was now a rapid torrent almost full to its upper banks, rushing on to join the distant Ony, and thence to pour its flood into the Severn. He had come in sight of the river, and was looking to see how near to the timbers of the bridge the angry tide had risen, when he beheld a horse struggling up the bank at a spot where in times past there had been a fording-way.

Anxious to assist even a horse in such trouble, he hastened forward, and was close upon the scene when an object tossed upon the surging flood caught his eye. He stooped and raised his hand above his brow, and looked more carefully.

It was a human being! a woman! One more look, as the form was whirled around, with the face towards him, and— Oh, horror! he saw Bella Waldron! And she had seen him, for she raised an arm, and surely tried to cry aloud; but on the next instant the mad flood swept over her, and the dear face was submerged.

"Oh! God, have mercy!" he cried. "Bella! Bella! Strive! strive for a little time! I am coming!"

(To be Continued.)



["I THINK I CAN EXTRICATE THE BOAT," HE SAID, WADING TOWARDS ITS FAIR OCCUPANT.]

BINGLEY WOOD.

A NOVELETTE.

(COMPLETE IN THIS NUMBER.)

CHAPTER I.

It was a miserable night. Harried relentlessly by a fierce wind masses of cloud rushed madly through the sky. Occasionally the wind seemed to forsake its diversions, dying away with sighs and sobs. Then with renewed vigour it returned to the charge, shrieking with delight to see noble trees bow in humble obeisance, and every leaf and twig do homage to its authority.

The moon, whenever an opportune rift in the clouds occurred, smiled pityingly on a wretched, rain-soaked world.

A train, having disgorged two passengers, issued from the small station of Bingley, leaving two forlorn travellers contemplating with rueful countenances the retreating carriages.

One of these passengers was a well-built gentleman of six-and-twenty, muffled in a waterproof warranted impervious to the attack of the elements. Tall, with a breadth of chest denoting great strength, and with a handsome, sunny face, which could notwithstanding on occasion look wondrously stern, he represented a fine type of England's sons.

The other passenger was a fine Newfoundland dog.

"Any luggage, sir?" inquired an obsequious porter, having an eye to a prospective tip.

"Yes. Is there a carriage from the Hall?"

"Haven't seen none, sir."

"I must walk, I suppose. I will send for my portmanteau in the morning. Good night. Bruce! come on, old fellow."

"Beg pardon, sir, but did you say the Hall, sir? The water is over the road below the dam, sir. Should say a short cut through the wood would save you some bit, if you bean't—"

"Thank you; I am not afraid. Good night." Leaving the porter to ruminate upon the perils of the road and upon not unwelcome beneficence, for the stranger had tipped him liberally, Ernest Hazeldine stepped into driving rain and pursued his lonely journey.

A dark, dreary road, with only a solitary house here and there, rain falling with aggravating persistence—a cold and lonely walk—might well have induced a traveller to spend the night at the village inn.

To tell the truth the insinuation of the official at the station had somewhat piqued our determined pedestrian.

"Afraid, indeed!" he muttered; "we've been through greater trouble than tramping a lonely road—eh, Bruce?"

Raising his bright, intelligent eyes the dog wagged his tail in token of assent.

"Why don't you speak, old man?—you'd be much more sociable!"

Opening his mouth and giving vent to a half bark the noble brute seemingly did his best to obey his master's behest.

Talking to the dog and advancing with rapid strides Ernest quickly arrived at a spot where the footpath led from the road across a meadow and thence into the wood.

As he entered crowds of recollections, incidents of boyhood's escapades, crossed his mind.

"Twelve years," he continued, still addressing his canine companion, "twelve years since Dick and I played our larks in this old wood. Poor Dick! Afghan bullets were too much for him. He was a brave lad—too brave, I fear, for—Hullo! What's that?—sounded like a cry!"

Stopping short and holding the dog by the ear he listened.

The wind with fierce gusts swept amongst the trees, and its dismal moan made a shudder run through his frame.

"I certainly thought I heard something; it might have been—"

"Help! help!"

The cry came through the air, borne by the wind with startling distinctness.

Ernest Hazeldine's heart stood still for one instant; then, grasping his stout stick, he dashed forward. A few strides brought him to an open space, and there a sight met his gaze which made his blood boil.

With his back to a tree stood a man with silvered hair. In front of him were two villainous-looking footpads, armed with short, heavy cudgels. Creeping up behind came a third, carrying a similar weapon.

His arm was raised and the moon for an instant revealed the fearful notches of the weapon as he raised it above the head of the brave old man, when with a short, fierce growl Bruce's teeth suddenly closed on his throat, bearing him to the earth. At the same time Ernest felled one of the other ruffians with his stick, and the third, seeing matters were desperate, with an oath beat a rapid retreat.

Stepping forward and clasping Ernest by the hand the old man, his voice husky with emotion, said:

"Young man, you have saved my life! How can I thank you?"

"By saying no more about it. Here, Bruce! come to heel"—for the dog was showing an inclination to worry the villain under him. "It is only what any other man in my position would have done. Help me to secure these rogues."

The two men began to show signs of returning animation.

"Is there any place where we can lodge them for the night?" asked Hazeldine.

"Yes, my gamekeeper's cottage," returned the other.

So bidding Bruce take charge of the man he had held down, now restored to consciousness, telling the man to walk beside the dog as he valued his life, and taking the other rogue between them, the captors marched their prisoners to the house of the gamekeeper, who received them with intense satisfaction, stating they were two of the most desperate characters in the village.

Bidding the keeper watch his prisoners care-

fully the elder gentleman turned to his companion.

"I trust, sir, you will not think me ungrateful for the inestimable service you have rendered me to-night, because of my inability to thank you in sufficiently warm terms. The debt I have incurred is one which cannot be cancelled by a mere effusion of words, nor would I have it so, but if there be any service Richard Travers can render to his preserver I trust you will mention it."

"Sir Richard Travers," replied Ernest, "if you consider the slight service I have rendered you worthy of any reward the favour I ask is that you will recall me to mind. My name is Hazeldine."

"Ernest Hazeldine—Dick's chum! The young urchin who was the ruin of my plum trees! Why, lad, this is indeed a pleasure!"

And truly affected the two men grasped each other by the hand in a silent grip more eloquent than words.

CHAPTER II.

"Ernest, lad, I'm glad to see you."

The hearty, genuine tones of the speaker, the loving light in the eyes, the beaming smile which irradiated the round, jovial face, of Squire Malfern amply corroborated the assertion.

It was the morning following the affray.

Nature, strangely versatile, had substituted for storm, wind, and rain, light, genial sunshine. The morning breeze gently laden with the scent of flowers came in delicious gusts through the open windows of the breakfast-room at the Hall.

Standing by the window and greeting each other with warm affection were the squire and his nephew.

"But come, my boy, you must be hungry, and I have urgent business to transact, so we will breakfast."

With assiduity characteristic of the race to which they belonged, and with appetites sharpened by the fresh morning wind, they attacked the plentiful repast with which the table was laden.

"Did you say business would call you away this morning?" inquired Ernest.

"Yes. I must go to Barsham to see my solicitor about that piece of land through which old Travers claims the right of way."

"The ancient dispute, sir?" queried Ernest, with an amused twinkle in his eye.

"The same, Ernest," answered the squire, a grave look spreading over his open, jovial face. "But you must not think, lad, that this is the real cause of our antagonism (have some of this tongue). A trumpery roadway through a remote corner of my estates would not cause the enmity of a lifetime. Yet I will lose every penny of my money before I yield an inch of ground to Sir Richard Travers."

"Why this enmity then, sir?"

"Lad, it is a tale of many years ago. When I was a young fellow about your age Richard and I were to each other as brothers. We both of us, however, fell in love and unfortunately with the same girl. I was the favoured suitor and I married her. One year of intense happiness was ours; then she died. Sir Richard and I quarreled, and since then we have been worse than strangers—enemies."

Strangely grave looked the squire as he finished, and somewhat uncomfortable too; conscious that Ernest was earnestly contemplating him.

"But I see Jim has brought the mare up to the door. I am sorry to leave you, lad. You must spend the day as best you can. There are some excellent trout to be caught in the Hollow."

Rising hastily and mounting his mare, Squire Malfern left to take counsel with his solicitor on the much-vaed question of "right of way."

Left to his own resources, and recollecting that the trout stream his uncle had recommended was a favourite resort of his boyhood, Ernest wended his way thither. Treading the velvety turf which covered the banks of the

stream, he whipped the water till he reached a spot where the trout abounded, but where it became almost impossible to throw the fly.

It was a delightful nook, shady and retired.

The trees lining the banks of the miniature river spread their branches protectingly over it, effectually screening it from the rays of the sun.

Through an opening of the trees could be seen the demesne of Sir Richard Travers. Far away as the eye could reach lay the broad acres of the baronet—acres report said sadly encumbered, owing to the reckless extravagance of his ancestors.

The Towers, a somewhat rambling building of Gothic architecture, its clustered columns overgrown with ivy, was built upon a commanding eminence.

A magnificent park studded with fine old trees stretched with gentle incline from the front of the mansion. The variety of the foliage—the gentle undulations of the green sward—formed a view of striking beauty, enhanced and completed by a lake, the still water of which gleamed in the sunlight.

A tiny barque, drifting at the pleasure and current of the breeze, floated on its peaceful bosom.

In the stern of this little craft, reclining in luxurious ease, was a fair girl.

Just ripening into womanhood, her dark brown hair escaping in bewitching waves from the bondage of the prim knot behind the head, strayed over the low, white forehead in delightful confusion. A sweet, pure face, with a complexion browned somewhat by the sun, yet rivaling the peach in delicacy of bloom, and a form of perfect symmetry, formed a picture of entrancing loveliness.

The eyelids, fringed with long, black lashes, hid the beautiful orbs it was their duty to protect.

Clad in the hazy folds of some soft, white material, and sleeping in graceful repose, she looked the impersonation of Tennyson's Elaine. She was indeed:

"Lovely, for she did not seem as dead,
But fast asleep, and lay, as though she smiled."

The little stream which relieved the lake of superfluous water was swollen by the rains of the previous night into an angry torrent. Drawn by the influence of the current the boat slowly entered its channel, the sound of the leaping, dashing water passing as soothing melody over the unconscious occupant.

Gracefully rounding a curve and yielding to the clamorous entreaties of the waves the advance of the craft became more rapid.

Faster and faster sped the boat. Right on in front were two boulders of rock rising out of the middle of the stream and about a yard apart. Between them the water rushed with fearful rapidity. Hurried onward with headlong speed, the prow of the boat was driven like a wedge between the rocks.

The shock, and a shout from Ernest Hazeldine, roused the sleeping girl, who awoke to the fact that she was fixed in the middle of a rushing stream—a circumstance which caused her considerably more embarrassment in that a gentleman was regarding her with a look in which mirth and gravity struggled for the mastery.

"Can I be of any assistance to you?" he courteously inquired.

"I fear not," was the dubious response.

Bewitchingly pretty she looked standing in the boat and striving with sweet confusion to coax her hair into its proper position. The attitude showed to full advantage the rounded and graceful development of her charming figure. Ernest thought as he regarded her with such evident admiration that the grave eyes drooped and the blush on her fair cheek deepened.

Without hesitation, and before she had time to remonstrate, he stepped into the stream, the water rising above the waist.

"I think I can extricate the boat," he said, wading towards its fair occupant.

Exerting all his strength he struggled, as well as the awkwardness of the position and the rush

of the water would permit, to free the boat from its confinement, but so firmly was it wedged between the rocks that all his efforts were in vain.

"I fear there is no alternative. I must carry you to the bank."

Honestly perplexed he looked as he stood in the water, and she read the gentlemanly consideration in his eyes as he asked:

"Can you trust me?"

A little hesitation and then he heard a shy: "I must."

Placing his strong arms around the fragile form, and lifting her with perfect ease, he bore her safely to the bank, wondering who his precious charge could be.

"It was very foolish of me to fall asleep. I fear I have effectually stopped your fishing."

"I have had more success than I could have anticipated," replied Ernest.

Packing up his rod he prepared to accompany her.

She saw the intent and a deep blush bathed her face and neck, real distress and alarm supplanting the confidence with which she had hitherto treated him.

Ernest did not perceive it, and commenced to walk by her side in the direction from which the boat came.

In his anxiety not to embarrass her he was not looking at the face by his side, or perhaps he would have wondered at its painful agitation.

With every step this agitation increased until at length, as they came to a spot where the path diverged from the stream, she stopped. With distress written in every feature, the sweet blue eyes looking commiseratingly on his dripping figure, and glancing from it, as with apprehension, up the path, she offered him her hand, and spoke, in a sweet, low voice, broken and agitated from some strange cause, a few words of hurried thanks.

"May I ask who is thanking me?" queried the unfortunate Ernest, detaining the little white palm she had offered.

A roguish gleam for one instant flitted into the upturned eyes, a provoking smile playing round the mouth as she answered:

"No, you may not."

"Will you come to see about the welfare of your boat to-morrow?"

"Pernaps."

The little hand was not released. Another apprehensive look up the path and then she said:

"Yes, I will come."

With hasty steps she departed; and as Ernest stood looking after her with a strange, warm glow at his heart he saw a tall, masculine form meet her, offer an arm, and escort her in the direction she was going.

A shadow crossed the handsome, sunny face, so bright but five minutes since, as he watched the greeting, and turning on his heel he strode in the direction of the Hall with conflicting feelings in his heart.

CHAPTER III.

The declining sun, shedding rays of golden splendour over hill and dale, threw a red gleam into the dark, musty library of The Towers.

In his "sanctum sanctorum" sat the baronet.

A sunbeam playing about his features, contrasting with strange incongruity with the weariness and dejection which rested on them, revealed the deep furrows stern Time, with that most effective of all his chisels—care—had carved there.

"I confess, Dalzell, I do not like the business. Although Maud has consented to my wishes and suggestions in a manner which must to you be specially satisfactory, and one which shows her appreciation of her duty to me, yet undoubtful influence is—"

"An unsatisfactory means to a satisfactory end. I have intimated already, Travers, that your daughter's engagement can be effectually cancelled by repaying the few thousand you

owe me. You, however, want my money. I want your daughter. Useless recrimination will scarcely avail you, unless you have the means of settling my little account."

As he finished the speaker emerged from the recess of the window in which he had been standing.

Tall and bony, the angularity of his frame, unrelieved by a tight-fitting clerical coat, showed in marked distinctness against the light which beamed in at the window.

There was a gleam of triumph in his eyes as he heard the troubled sigh of the baronet.

"But come, let us join the ladies."

The baronet rose and silently followed his companion as he quitted the apartment. Crossing a spacious hall Dalzell, with a manner almost suggestive of proprietorship, entered the drawing-room. An air of comfort, ease, and luxury reigned here and throughout the home of Sir Richard Travers. Richly furnished, almost lavishly magnificent in the splendour of its appurtenances, everything was yet arranged with a delicate refinement which produced a harmonious effect.

The Reverend Bagot Dalzell, the incumbent of Bingley, was a man of considerable private wealth, and the recipient of £500 per annum for ministering to the spiritual necessities of the people of his pastorate.

Rumours had gone abroad that although he had, till the age of thirty-five, avoided matrimonial snares, he had at last succumbed to the attractions of Lady Maud Travers, only daughter of Sir Richard.

He was dark, with heavy features; his lips wore an habitual smile of cynicism, his arrogant, self-important bearing marred a somewhat commanding appearance; whilst the look of cunning in his eyes, whose colour it was difficult to determine, filled one with mistrust and repugnance.

Friendly with few, an enemy to be avoided, he was much sought after and petted by the surrounding gentry of Bingley.

He had advanced large sums of money to Sir Richard, whose lands were already heavily burdened by mortgages, and the impecuniosity of the baronet enabled him, when he proposed for the hand of Lady Maud, to secure the father's influence and authority as a means to win her consent.

A sweet voice, singing to a harp accompaniment, greeted his ear as he entered. The baronet heard it also as he lingered on the threshold, listening with an expression of infinite love on his face. Only for an instant. The careworn face, with its brief smile of tenderness, was suddenly contracted by a spasm of pain, and with a stifled groan he turned abruptly on his heel and sought the quietude of the balcony which ran along the front of the house.

As he paced to and fro with uneasy strides, looking over the so-called acres of the Travers family, he noticed a horseman riding at a leisurely trot up the broad avenue of lime trees.

There was nothing unusual in such an appearance, for The Towers was full of visitors, yet the action of the horse and the perfect seat of the rider attracted the critical gaze of the baronet.

"By George! It is the nag which that old rascal, Malfern, out-bid me for at Hensley sale, and if I mistake not it is Hazeldine on his back."

There was a cordial greeting as Ernest Hazeldine reined in his spirited steed. All aglow with exercise, his close-fitting riding suit showing to advantage the strength and symmetry of his figure, his eyes lighted up with the excitement of the ride, he looked a remarkably handsome man.

A groom led the horse to the stables and then the baronet piloted the way into the house.

Maud was still singing as Ernest was presented to Lady Travers.

"You are welcome at The Towers, Mr. Hazeldine. As the friend of my brave boy I am more than pleased to see you."

There were a tremulousness of voice and a quivering of the lips as the kind face looked

with motherly regard on the "friend of her brave boy." For the only son of Lady Travers, a lieutenant in the army serving in Afghanistan, had been reported "missing" in the list of the killed and wounded after an engagement, and now, after a lapse of six months, no tidings having been heard of him, the sorrowful conviction had forced itself upon her that the brave lad had died nobly fighting for his country and his queen.

"Mr. Bagot Dalzell—Mr. Hazeldine."

A supercilious elevating of the eyebrows on the part of the elder gentleman. A very stiff bow from Ernest.

The music had suddenly ceased, the musician evidently becoming aware of the proximity of a stranger.

"Maud, my child! come to me. This is Mr. Hazeldine; Dick's friend. My daughter—Mr. Hazeldine."

The sweet face bowed longer than conventionality demanded—was flushed with confusion—nor was the girl's embarrassment lessened by the tender, half-laughing face of Ernest as he recognised the "Elaine" of the morning's adventure.

The guests fortunately had passed through the open casements to the lawn, followed by Sir Richard and his wife, leaving Maud with Ernest to bring up the rear.

"I fear, Mr. Hazeldine, you thought me very ungrateful—"

"Very, Miss Travers. I was unprepared for the startling, though agreeable revelation. Elaine should have confessed who she was this morning; yet I trust she has sustained no harm from her extraordinary escapade, and that she is not very alarmed at my advent."

"Nay, do not laugh at me, Mr. Hazeldine. You startled me very much, and I must have my revenge. I challenge you to oppose me at tennis."

"I accept the challenge, with pleasure."

It was a delightful evening. Nothing was needed to enhance the pleasure of those who participated in the game, whilst to those who were old enough to prefer a seat in the shade the graceful movements of the figures the intermingling of bright costumes and the merry laugh at the non-success of some energetic effort to reach a ball, formed a tout ensemble of happy, innocent enjoyment.

Yet amongst the people who stood apart was the Rev. Bagot Dalzell, watching the game with no amiable expression of feature. Although he saw that Maud and Ernest were enemies, the spirited contest between them seemingly afforded him little satisfaction. With lowering brows he watched the game to its close, and the frown deepened as he heard:

"Mr. Hazeldine, I have beaten you."

"It is a very pleasurable experience, Miss Travers."

Maud caught the sardonic expression of Dalzell's face as he heard the repartee, and the merry, joyous features suddenly paled, and from the lips the bright smile died away.

"You are feeling chilly. May I fetch you a shawl?" inquired Ernest, noticing the sudden gravity.

"Thank you, no. We will return to the house."

It was rapidly growing dark, and the players separated to dress for dinner, to reassemble however at the hospitable board of the baronet. The fare was choice, the wines were perfect, yet unusual quietude prevailed. Conversation flagged. There was an entire lack of witicism and happy badinage—a cloud seemed to rest upon the company.

The voice of the Rev. Bagot Dalzell, with a self-opinionated ring about it, was plainly audible, producing a depressing influence on those around.

Specially obnoxious did he make himself to Ernest, apparently with malice prepense. Egotistical and arrogant to a degree, Dalzell's superciliousness occasionally made the hot blood rise to Ernest's face when some special assumption of superiority bordered on insolence.

Dinner at last over the ladies retired to the

drawing-room, whilst the gentlemen lingered over their wine.

Ernest joined Sir Richard on the balcony.

"Do you smoke, Hazeldine? I have some choice havannahs here."

"Thanks. What a lovely night it is, and—listen!"

Through the open windows above them came the soft, ravishing notes of a violin, accompanied by a harp, playing the opening bars of some delicious production of the old masters.

The two men stood in silence whilst the night air was flooded with sweetest harmony.

The silence was broken by the baronet.

"We shall be sorry to lose her."

"To lose her, Sir Richard!" was the astonished ejaculation.

"Yes. Have you not heard of her engagement?"

A moment or two of silence, in which the character of the music overhead changed.

A wail of passionate feeling rising with strange agitation higher and higher. Then a hoarse voice said:

"I have not. Who is the fortunate individual?"

"Bagot Dalzell. She marries in two months' time."

The storm of music is over. Subsiding with sobs and sighs it came through the evening air with a wonderful pathos and died with a sweet pathetic note, as though expressing sympathy for a brave heart on the balcony and a white, drawn face full of pain.

CHAPTER IV.

"BRUCE! Come here! Take up your position exactly in front of me, and listen to what I have to say."

It was the morning following the tennis party.

Seated on the bank of the trout stream was Ernest Hazeldine, addressing his dog with mock gravity.

The dog, obedient to the command, had placed himself in the desired position, and was regarding his master with praiseworthy attention.

"This, sir, is the scene of the disaster."

The dog's mouth suddenly opened and a bright red tongue protruded, whilst his tail maintained a steady oscillation.

"The lady would not tell me her name, but she promised to look after the welfare of her boat to-day."

Whether the dog appreciated his master's meaning cannot be determined, but one ear was suddenly uplifted, imparting to his face such a peculiarly questioning look the risible faculties of the speaker were upset.

"Why did I come here? Also to look after the boat, of course."

Implicitly confident that the explanation was a right one, the dog resumed his look of intelligence and attention.

"But you need not anticipate her coming. I have met her since, and I think it improbable she will trouble about the fate of the craft which treated her so ungallantly, or think of a promise made to me under compulsion."

The speaker, looking through the opening in the trees as he spoke, gazed long and earnestly at the clustering columns of The Towers.

The dog, judging from the fit of abstraction that the interview was concluded, marched away.

At the same time a maiden, wandering among the labyrinthine flower-beds at The Towers, was meditating.

"He will not be by the brook to-day, as he was here last night. Why did he leave so suddenly, I wonder? Papa, too, looked very grave when he came in. Yet I must go, I suppose—he made me promise."

Maud finished her soliloquy with a merry laugh as she recalled the adventure of the previous day, and entered the house, to reappear shortly after attired for a walk.

As she wended her way with light, graceful steps by the brooklet toward the scene of the mis-

hap a cold nose was suddenly pushed into the bare white hand by her side and a huge black head caused her to scream involuntarily.

She was reassured by honest, loving eyes and demonstrations of delight, as Bruce walked by her side, occasionally lifting his head for a caress, which she did not hesitate to give, wondering who his master could be.

There was no need to wonder long, for as they rounded the corner of the path they met him towing the boat up the stream.

It was a very simple good morning, and yet there were tell-tale blushes on the girl's cheek, and Ernest was conscious that his heart beat quickly. There could be no mistaking the light in his eyes as he held the little hand within his own for one brief instant.

Wandering down the green, mossy pathway they forgot the boat, the object of their mission. Diverted by the witty sallies of her friend, the fear which had distressed Maud the previous day was dispelled, as in happy abandonment she walked by Ernest's side.

The broad-brimmed straw hat, taken from her head and swung to and fro in her hand, was filled with the field flowers they had stayed occasionally to gather.

He had just culled some forget-me-nots from a difficult nook where she could not reach them, and had laughingly demanded a bouquet for his services.

Standing on tip-toe to reach the button-hole in which he petitioned, to have them put, with merry badinage she tried to meet the eyes looking earnestly into her face; but she was not prepared for the depth of tenderness she found in them, and she feared to recognise the strange agitation and glow in her own heart, or to interpret the trembling of her fingers as they strove to fasten the flowers.

A harsh, dissonant voice broke the spell; something resembling distant thunder was heard through the trees.

"Get out, you brute!"

More thunder. Evidently Bruce was stopping the progress of some intruder.

"It is Mr. Dalzell. Good bye."

Ernest had hardly divined her intention when she disappeared behind the trees, wild flowers marking the way of her retreat.

Ominous sounds were proceeding from the path ahead, when a commanding "Come here, sir," from Ernest brought Bruce to his feet.

At the same time appeared the Rev. Bagot Dalzell in a towering rage.

"I will have that dog shot! I demand that you muzzle him at once. He is dangerous."

And indeed he looked dangerous. Although crouching at Ernest's feet, two pearly rows of fangs were disclosed, and low, fierce growls pressed how willingly he would bury them in Dalzell's throat.

A severe blow from the stick the clergyman carried had completely closed his left eye, but the remaining orb gleamed with fierce rage upon his assailant.

"I shall suggest, sir, that you make a rapid retreat," said Ernest, in suppressed anger, "or you may repent hitting him."

For once in his life Dalzell had met his match. He quailed before the three eyes regarding him with honest anger, and another deep, suggestive growl from Bruce settled the matter.

With a look of malignant hatred he hastened down the pathway strewed with wild flowers.

"Good Bruce, go and take care of her."

The dog dashed past the retreating clergyman and took up his position beside a fragile girl, who wondered at the disfigured face and why the Rev. Bagot Dalzell did not overtake her as she hurried homeward.

* * * * *

It was eventide.

The bells of the little church of Bingley were summoning the villagers to worship.

Toil-worn men and women, lads and lasses in the bloom and beauty of youth, old men whose silvered hair and tottering steps indicated they were not far from the great transition to another world, were hurrying to evensong.

Weeks had passed by, and Ernest, on this the last day of his stay, entered Dalzell's church.

He had hoped to declare by his presence that he bore no malice, but Dalzell was away, a neighbouring minister officiated in his stead.

Alone in the large oak pew of the Travers family sat Maud, whom Ernest had steadily avoided since the contretemps by the brook-side.

The pure, spirituelle face, pale and unlike the Maud of two months ago, was bowed in devotion. All the gladness which once irradiated the features had departed, leaving a sadness and dejection which to him were unaccountable.

Only once were her eyes lifted during the service, and they were suffused with tears.

He was kneeling almost opposite her, and as her eyes, attracted by the subtle fascination of his gaze, met his, every nerve thrilled in his frame; his heart seemed bursting with its great love.

Perhaps it had not been kind to avoid her thus. He thought there was reproach in those sweet eyes.

A great yearning to comfort her in her trouble entered into his soul; but she had given her heart to another, to whom alone belonged the right to shield and protect her, and he was hardly a friend.

It was a simple service. The quietude of the evening was typical of eternal rest and peace, as, with the benediction of the aged minister resting upon them the congregation slowly dispersed.

Ernest overtook Maud at the little gate at the end of the pathway, and with grave politeness raised his hat.

"Have you no escort, Miss Travers? Will you allow me to accompany you?"

The sweet face was not lifted as she replied:

"I am alone, but do not let me trouble you, Mr. Hazeldine. I assure you I am not afraid."

"I need no assurance of your courage, Miss Travers, yet, if you do not forbid me the pleasure, I will inflict my company upon you."

"Thank you."

He held the wicket open for her to pass through. Side by side they walked along the shaded footpath leading to The Towers.

The moon had risen just over the hills, and her silvery beams fell athwart the beaten track.

It was a dangerous night for those two hearts, each trying to keep its own secret. A painful silence had come upon them, which each feared to break.

The lights of The Towers were getting very near. At the last stile, ere he helped her to climb to the top bar, he gently detained her, holding her hands.

The features he loved so well could not be hidden now, yet her eyes were averted from the handsome face earnestly regarding her.

"Have I offended you, Miss Travers?"

No reply.

"I return to town to-morrow. You will grant me forgiveness before I go?"

It was cruel to keep her standing there. Ominous signs proceeded from the quivering lips of approaching tears, while the white face was turned to him in mute appeal.

Still he did not let her go.

"You have not answered me."

"I have nothing to forgive."

"You will let me congratulate you and wish you much joy in the future, Miss Travers?"

There was only a choking sob.

How his heart bled for her! Prudence was almost forgotten—honour almost overcome by his great love.

"Maud, will you not tell me your trouble?"

"I cannot. This is very foolish of me. Let me go. 'Good bye.'

There was a wild bitterness in his heart as he raised the proffered hand to his lips. With straining eyes he watched the retreating figure till it was lost in the darkness; then, with a heavy heart, he found his way back to the Hall.

CHAPTER V.

"Hush! Oh! Mary—tread light. Have you taken the key from the door?"

"Yes, miss."

"Open the casement gently, then. What was that?"

"Only the creaking of the hinge, miss. Ugh! how dark!"

"All the better for my purpose. You are sure John will be waiting by the lodge gates?"

"He promised me faithfully to be there, Miss Maud, and he never broke his word to me yet. Are you not afraid to venture down the avenue alone?"

"I would brave a thousand deaths, Mary, to escape to-night. Be faithful to me and God will reward your fidelity. Lock the door from the inside and retire to rest. Good bye."

"Good bye, dear Miss Maud."

A figure, closely muffled, emerged from one of the ground casements of The Towers, and with swift, noiseless steps wended its way under the lime trees. Only once did it stay to gaze long and earnestly, as though taking a last loving farewell of the indistinct mass just perceptible in the darkness. Then the girl resumed her hurried walk with something like a sob.

Reaching the end of the avenue she unlocked the gate of the lesser lodge and passed through into the high road.

"Is it you, miss?" inquired a deep voice by her side.

"Yes, my good John. Where is the carriage?"

"Hard by, miss."

As she ensconced herself in the close carriage to which he directed her John mounted the driving-seat.

"Drive quickly. We have not much time."

On the still air of the night preceding the marriage of Miss Maud Travers with the Rev. Bagot Dalzell was suddenly heard the roll of wheels, as a close carriage, driven at a rapid rate, hurried along the country road.

Onward it went, with unchecked speed, until it neared the red and green lights of some small railway station, when a head was protruded and a sweet voice exclaimed:

"You had better stop here, John. It will be imprudent to drive too near."

Having drawn up the carriage by the side of the road he helped her to alight, and Maud, drawing the shawl closer round her head, hurried towards the platform of the station.

Only just in time, for the night express came thundering in almost immediately. Amid the bustle and scurry which usually attended its arrival a tall, military-looking stranger descended and began to look for his luggage.

"By y'r leave, sir."

The stranger took one pace to his rear to avoid the hand-truck a porter was trundling along the platform, and placed his heel on the dainty foot of a lady immediately behind him, almost crushing it.

No exclamation of pain proceeded from her, but the white, set lips of the partially concealed face denoted the agony she was suffering.

"A thousand apologies for my clumsiness," exclaimed the gentleman, turning suddenly round. Then seeing the frail, muffled figure anathematised himself as a "blundering ass."

"I fear I have hurt you."

"Do not apologise. It is nothing," was the response, in a low voice.

In direct contradiction to her assertion she limped towards the train.

"Let me assist you."

Very patiently, and with gentlemanly consideration, the stranger conducted her to a first-class carriage.

Something in his voice and manner strangely agitated the lady, whom he felt was peering hard at him, but she was very timid, and the light from the station lamps was not sufficient to reveal his features.

"Stand clear there, sir! All right!"

As with banging of doors and a scream the train left the platform the military gentleman, his curiosity aroused, walked to the ticket-box.

"Clerk, a lady passenger closely wrapped travelled by this train."

"Yes, sir."

"Where did she book for?"

"Did you notice what 'class' she travelled, sir?"

"First."

"One first class, single fare, Ashley."

"Thank you."

Into the dark night he went, stepping at a brisk rate along the high road leading to Bingley. It was a long walk, yet the pedestrian in a little over two hours reached the lodge gates of The Towers.

"I must ring the fellow up, I suppose. Hullo! What the deuce does this mean? This game-keeper is a careless fellow!"

One of the lesser gates yielded to his touch. Noiselessly closing it he hurried along the avenue, as though familiar with the ground.

"Old Stiggins used to sleep in the west wing of the house; I wonder if that is his dormitory now? However, here goes!"

The effect of a shower of gravel against the window-panes over head was instantaneous. A head, adorned with marvellous headgear, was at once protruded and a voice exclaimed:

"Who's there?"

"Richard Travers," replied a deep voice. "Come down at once, Stiggins, and come quietly."

The head abruptly disappeared, and the owner, ill-satisfied at being roused at such an unseemly hour, lighting a lamp trudged downstairs.

Softly unfastening the bolts the front door swung easily open on its hinges. Instead, however, of the silvered hair and portly figure of the baronet a young fellow strode into the hall.

"Mur—"

In an instant a hand was clapped over the butler's mouth, while a low voice exclaimed:

"Don't be an idiot, Stiggins! Do you not know me?"

There was something too tangible about the hand over the butler's mouth, or he would have believed he saw a ghost. As it was, so startled was he that the lamp dropped from his hand, leaving them in utter darkness.

"Good Heavens, Mr. Richard! is it you, sir?"

"Hush! you will rouse the house. Refasten that door and come to the library."

With shaking hands the old servant proceeded to reshoo the bolts. Then, picking up the lamp with trembling eagerness, he hastened to the library.

"How are my mother and father, Stiggins?"

"Not what they used to be, sir, afore they concluded as how you was dead."

"Dead! What do you mean? Have they not heard from me?"

"Not a word, sir; and Miss Maud marries to-morrow, sir—leastways to-day."

"Maud! Whom?"

"Parson Dalzell, sir, more's the pity, axing your pardon, sir."

"Bagot Dalzell! Stiggins, where can I sleep?"

"The blue chamber is empty, sir."

"That will do excellently. Let no one know of my arrival. What time do we breakfast?"

"At eight, sir."

"Then good night. I shall want some shaving water."

Noiselessly he found his way to his bedroom, leaving the butler ejaculating:

"He always were that cool, but this beats all."

Silence reigned in The Towers.

* * * * *

It was the morning of the wedding. Sir Richard Travers paced the breakfast room, six paces forward and six back, turning on his heels with persistent regularity.

He had aged much in appearance during the last few days. The lines on his face were deeper, the furrows on his brow more decided. He halted at length by the window.

Breakfast was partially spread, and as the door opened he thought a servant entered and needed it not.

A hand was laid on his shoulder.

"Father!"

Swiftly the baronet turned.

"My dear boy!"

Who shall tell the ecstasy of joy which flooded the parent's heart, the light irradiating the careworn face, the blissful reunion with the son who was dead and is alive again?"

"Break it gently to my mother!"

With trembling haste the baronet sought his wife.

"Maud, a great joy has come to us!"

"We shall lose one to-day, Richard!"

"Dick is not dead!"

She did not faint, only a great thankfulness crept into the mother's face, and the quiet sorrow left the kindly eyes.

"Are you sure, dear?"

"Certain!" was the jubilant response. "Here he is, ask him!"

It was an affecting scene. Sir Richard walked from the room, leaving mother and son locked in each other's arms in a close embrace.

"Mary!"

"Yes, Sir Richard," answered a bright little maid.

"Tell Miss Maud to come here at once."

Blithely the lassie departed on her mission, returning with a look of well-simulated alarm.

"I have rapped at Miss Maud's door and have tried it, but have got no answer, Sir Richard."

Quickly the father and son dashed up the stairs.

"Rap—rap—rap! Maud!"

No answering sound was heard. Vaguely alarmed the younger gentleman seized the door and, exerting all his strength, burst in.

No Maud. Every evidence of a hurried departure—an open letter asking forgiveness.

* * * * *

"Mr. Bagot Dalzell."

All was consternation at The Towers as the clergyman was announced.

"I will see him," said Dick, abruptly.

"Good morning, Dalzell!"

"Why—Travers! I thought you were dead!"

"I have disappointed you, I fear. The wedding will have to be postponed. My sister cannot see you this morning."

More cadaverous looked the clergyman's face, while the green glare of his eyes told of suppressed fury.

"Cannot see me. Why?"

"She has run away!"

Quietly the words were spoken. For one instant Dalzell sat aghast ere, rising with a voice hoarse with anger, he said:

"Then I wash my hands of the whole affair. I cancel my engagement, demanding at the same time immediate redemption of the £100's which I hold."

"The first part of your generous intimation," sarcastically replied Dick, "I will endeavour to communicate to my sister, your considerate loan shall be redeemed by this post. Good morning."

With freezing politeness he bowed the clergyman from the room. Impotent rage was stamped on the Rev. Bagot's countenance, for right well he knew that with Dick's advent a large amount of property returned to the Dalzell family.

There were conflicting elements of joy and sorrow in the house—joy for the returned one—sorrow for the missing.

Completely mystified, the baronet's suspicions rested upon Ernest, and acting upon impulse he suddenly started for that gentleman's London office.

Dick was standing on the steps of The Towers as the baronet departed, and he looked in no wise discomposed by the latest theory concerning the disappearance.

"You will ask Hazeldine to stay with us for a time, sir?"

But not a muscle relaxed in the baronet's face, nor did he vouchsafe an answer to the laughing remark of his son.

For a time Dick was lost in thought.

"It might have been she. Ashley! Ashley! Why, I seem to know the place. Stiggins!"

"Yes, sir. Coming, sir."

"Do you know a place by the name of Askey?"

"Why, bless you, sir, as well as I know myself. My sister, as nursed you and Miss Maud, and was servant here for fifteen years, lives there. Why, sir, now as I comes to think, you and Miss Maud went to stay there years ago."

"Order the dog-cart at once," was the most irrelevant command.

Merrily rattled the dog-cart along the high road to the station, and soon Dick was bowling along the line leading to Ashley.

Just as evening shadows began to fall he stopped at the door of a picturesque little cottage.

The middle-aged woman who answered his rap instantly recognised him.

"Is she here, nurse?"

"Yes, sir. Step in here, sir."

"Do not tell her I have come, but send her in for something."

The grey light of the evening came through the white curtains of the little room. Silently the traveller sat—patiently waiting. At length the door opened.

"Well, little runaway!"

"Oh, my darling Dick! My dear, dear brother."

Sobbing as though her heart would break, she leaned on his breast. Gently soothing her, as he might have soothed a child, he waited until the wild storm of weeping subsided. The interview between brother and sister was a long one.

"Just one thing more, Maud: Mr. Bagot Dalzell desires me to intimate that he breaks off the engagement entirely."

The terrible strain had been too much for her. She had fainted.

CHAPTER VI.

ERNEST HAZELDINE was seated in his office in London. Hot and uncomfortable, he had not done a stroke of work satisfactorily, and a settled gloom had fallen upon his handsome face.

"Well, I suppose it is all settled now. I hope she will be happy."

Some parchment deeds were spread open on the desk before him, but the soliloquy did not seem to have special connection with them.

"Gentleman wishes to see you, sir."

"Show him in."

"Sir Richard Travers!"

Utter amazement was written on every lineament of Ernest's face. The baronet had assumed a look of austerity, yet he was somewhat taken aback by the honest surprise with which Hazeldine regarded him.

No trace of guilt was in the honest, open countenance, no flinching in the eyes which met his.

"Hazeldine, where is my daughter?"

With sheer perplexity and astonishment, Ernest regarded the baronet, while his lips slowly articulated:

"Your daughter?"

"It ill becomes you, sir, to assume an air of amazement. One would think it sufficient for any man to cajole a virtuous girl from her home and parents in the dead of the night, without playing the hypocrite or seeking by subterfuge to—"

"Silence, Sir Richard! Whatever may be the unfortunate catastrophe which has befallen your daughter, I assure you I am ignorant of the whole affair."

The steady determination of the young voice, the integrity written on every feature, staggered the violent baronet, and finally convinced him.

Taking the seat offered him and wiping the perspiration from his brow, he told Ernest the whole story, commencing with Dick's return and Maud's disappearance.

"Was this marriage obnoxious to her, Sir Richard?"

"It was imperative."

"Most probably she has taken refuge with some of her friends."

"We will hope for the best. Now, Hazeldine, I have to ask you, from Dick, to stay with us for a month."

"But, Sir Richard—"

"Nay, no bats, lad, you will come."

A month sped by.

Major Travers returned from Ashley with welcome intelligence. A quiet interview with the baronet succeeded, and Maud, forgiven, was restored to home and love.

She had been ill, but the joy of meeting her brother, the loving attention, and above all the removal of care from the young life, were rapidly restoring her strength.

Ernest was still staying at The Towers, for he and Dick were firm friends. Indeed everybody liked the good-humoured young lawyer, as everybody's manner declared. No, not everybody, Maud had become very shy and reserved to him. Yet was there ever when he came near a soft light in the averted eyes and a warm suffusion of damask cheeks which told of some strong emotion.

"Ernest, my boy, come here," called a voice from the conservatory.

"Yes, Sir Richard."

"What do you think of these plants?"

"Lovely. But I want just a word with you."

"I am at your service, Ernest."

"I love your daughter, sir, and—"

"I will have nothing more to do with these love affairs. Have you spoken to Maud?"

"No, sir."

"Then I leave it to her discretion."

Seated by an open window, with some crewel work in her hands, sat Maud Travers. The bloom and beauty of health had returned to her cheek, and she looked very lovely in the light of the setting sun.

But the light was failing, and the girl sat in a reverie, gazing over the hills with a soft, glad joy in the sweet eyes. Evidently her dream was a very happy one, for a smile played round her lips, when a step was heard on the balcony, and the work was instantly resumed.

"How industrious we are. It is too late to work longer, Miss Travers, and the sunset is lovely. Will you not come and see it?"

"With pleasure," was the soft, tremulous response.

Side by side they wandered down the avenue of lime trees, coming at length to a stile. Gently assisting her over they traversed the pathway, perfectly happy in each other's presence.

"The beauty of our country makes one feel very glad, Mr. Hazeldine."

"It was very beautiful five weeks since, Miss Travers, and yet one of us was unaccountably sad."

A provoking sun-bonnet hid the face his mirthful eyes desired to see.

"You must not remind me of those days, they are inexpressibly painful to me. I only desire to forget them."

"And the boating excursion?"

Again the sun-bonnet protruded itself. Placing himself so as to stop her further advance along the pathway, he gently removed the objectionable hat, and his handsome face was bent down close to the uncovered head as he whispered:

"Must it all be forgotten?"

"Forgetfulness is not imperative," was the coy response.

"Then will you tell me why you were so sad on that last evening of my stay?"

"You know."

"Has all the sadness gone?"

"Yes." The pleading eyes were raised to his. "Do not ask me any more."

"Only one more question," he tenderly replied. "Will you answer it?"

"If I can."

The sweet, shy eyes had drooped, and the head was bowed. Something told her as he took possession of her hands what that one question

would be, and she feared lest he should discover her secret.

"Maud, do you love me?"

"Yes."

No one but Ernest could have heard the tremulous whisper, and he sealed the confession with a kiss. Folding her in his arms in one long embrace, oblivious to all but the bliss of having won the love of the sweet girl who had promised to be his wife, he was quite unaware that a gentleman in clerical garb stood a silent spectator of the scene.

Slowly they wended their way back to The Towers, the pure, happy face by Ernest's side raised to his in loving confidence.

"And you will not run away, my darling?"

The only response was a provoking pout, which had to be kissed away, and a soft pressure of her arm assured him he had nothing to fear.

The golden leaves of autumn were robing the trees in a foliage of gold when a wedding was solemnised in the little church of Bingley.

As Ernest led his bride from the church Squire Malfern, with his rubicund, jovial face beaming with pleasure, met Sir Richard Travers in the porch. For one instant they hesitated, then, grasping each other by the hand, abandoned for ever the old feud of "right of way."

The families at The Towers and The Hall were once more reunited, and the union, in the years which followed, was rich in love and happiness.

AMONG FRIENDS.

A SHORT STORY.

(COMPLETE IN THIS NUMBER.)

CHAPTER I.

"If I were an artist," said Miss Stevens, gaily, "such a day as this would make me forget all other duties but that of attempting to realise the delicate colours and peculiar forms of these swiftly-moving clouds."

"What would be the use if you couldn't sell your work after it was done?" answered Crugen, somewhat gloomily. "To be an artist is all very well if you have cash at a banker's, but to have to wait for somebody with money to purchase what you have on hand is to be in a state of dependence which makes excellent art work impossible."

"Oh! to be sure, there is the reverse side, practical, unromantic side. If not, all would seek to live by art, and there would be a surfeit of heart-breaking attempts upon exhibition in every shop-window. I should even essay art myself."

"I suppose you know whatsort of clouds these are?" said Bandero, our meteorological and scientific neighbour. "I mean the scientific name. They are cumulus, and the height at which they begin to form is in general terms equal to the difference between the temperature of the air and the dew point multiplied by one hundred feet."

"Why don't you multiply them by one hundred legs?" asked Crugen, sardonically. "Now don't crush us by an exhaustive answer. Let us recover somewhat from your previous infliction. Science is very exhausting."

Mr. Bandero, who was a good-natured man, laughed heartily, in which mirth Crugen descended to join, though in a somewhat reserved manner.

The clouds were of peculiar form, twisting in the fresh morning breeze, and showing depths of pearly grey shadings throughout their mass. Beyond, the pure blue sky seemed even darker than usual, while the water of the lake was of a rare purple, intermixed with streaks of green where the sunlight struck it in long, irregular figures.

Whenever Miss Stevens was visiting us there

was no lack of gentlemen calling upon her, both when proceeding down town and on their return. She was an agreeable young lady, and, if handsome, was not dependent upon her beauty alone for attractiveness. She had an intelligence that was especially commendable in a sex that too frequently have a code which, if it does not preclude thoroughness of training in anything, makes a certain spitefulness of tongue their most prominent attribute.

To find a lady who did not sneer at almost everyone with a more or less polite though supercilious bearing was sufficient alone to account for her being held in high esteem by a wide circle of acquaintances.

For my part, I particularly favoured her visiting us for the reason that she was an excellent musician. She read music readily, and as I have a library of a thousand volumes of music, and have no one in my immediate family who can accompany me readily when I feel disposed to try over new pieces, it was very gratifying to have Ellen at the house to fill that position. Music is an art which is widely cultivated, and yet the number of ready players is very small. Almost every house that holds a piano has one or two players, who, given time, can master a quite difficult composition. But to the student of music this necessity of practising every piece is objectionable. Up to a certain degree of difficulty to play nearly at sight is a requisite. The necessity of continual finger practise is overcome by mental acuteness, and generally the technical, difficult pieces upon which young ladies spend so much time are not worth the acquisition.

"Come, Miss Stevens," I said, presently, "let us try over this new opera. We can do it in half an hour."

And I went for my violincello.

Soon we were sailing away with the music and forgetful of all other engagements.

In the midst of a song an interruption occurred. Mr. Calvin had come with his waggonette to take us to the Sunday-school picnic. Mr. Calvin was the minister, and had that social organisation which made him attentive to others and thoughtful of them.

I have no social qualities, and hardly give others a thought.

"Won't you go too?" asked Mr. Calvin, as I handed the ladies in and stepped back out of the way.

I declined almost ungraciously. A Sunday-school picnic had about as many attractions for me as a bull fight.

"I will go out and see what progress Crugen has made with his hermitage," I thought; for Crugen was building a sort of secluded studio overlooking the lake at about five miles' distance. Tom was soon saddled and brought out, and mounting him I rode hastily away.

I had always had a suspicion that Crugen was interested in Miss Stevens; and yet he did not seem to pay her marked attention. As an outsider I was not inclined to assist in any match-making scheme which my wife might suggest, though it probably was true enough that Crugen had money enough, and Miss Stevens was very intelligent.

I did not know how well off Crugen might be. He was a reserved man, and though we were somewhat intimate, not to that degree which warrants the asking of personal questions as to income and the like. He sent his pictures away and seemed to sell them readily, from which I argued both the possession of artistic and business qualifications, an essential union in this prosaic and practical age. Though he might complain of want of patronage I looked upon such grumbling as a species of articulate moodiness which was peculiar to his temperament.

It is not unusual to meet with men eminently successful in life who from a tinge of melancholy in their temperament perceive the shadows in their position much more distinctly than the lights and are much more prone to dwell upon them. A little touch of such pessimism is not unpleasing. It seems to remove cause of envy, when, as is often the case, superior talents might

arouse this feeling in us. It apparently makes compensation, gives a balance.

I found Crugen sitting before his easel, engaged in deftly putting upon canvas a part of the scene before his woodland studio. He greeted me calmly, and I took a seat to smoke and chat or look on.

The processes of painting have a great attraction for me—more even than the completed work. I like to see the picture carried forward under my very eyes. Crugen suggested once that this was a sign that I had the artistic temperament myself.

"The artist," he said, "always prefers the suggestion to the complete embodiment. The latter is apt to be disappointing. I myself prefer a sketch to a finished picture."

To-day the topic which came up for discussion was solitude as compared with society. He had looked so contented, so social, so to speak, though by himself, that I apologised for intruding.

"You are always welcome," he answered, "because you are an appreciative friend. It is the worst solitude one can know to be amongst those who take no interest in your work, who despise it and you for devoting yourself to it. I have known what that isolation is. Oh, it is terrible!"

"Well," said I, lightly, "nature seems to enforce on all sides her words that man is intended for society, and considering that women adapt themselves to men perhaps marriage may be the end in view in thus implanting in us this distaste of solitude. Certainly the sympathy between two of opposite sex is closer than that between those of similar character—through friendship is a very good thing."

"Marriage may be a worse isolation than a dungeon," said Crugen, fiercely.

"Tut, tut! It is very unphilosophical to condemn a class for the faults of a few. I am inclined to think that the fault in married life is usually with the man, and in most cases when there is trouble an examination would clear the way to a pleasant settlement."

"I am glad you think so. Having that opinion you will be apt to be happy—until you change. A good many women only ask the privilege of having their own way—which is what your words imply."

"Do you think Miss Stevens tries to have her own way?"

"Miss Stevens is not married; besides, she is an exception. I am willing to admit that she disproves a general rule—at present."

"Oh, she does? Yes, that is the way with men when they see someone they like. She seems entirely different from the sex."

I was led into saying more than I intended, Crugen had appeared so impulsive. I could not resist the temptation to stir him up.

"If you mean that I am in love with Miss Stevens you are probably not far wrong. But if you think that this will lead to anything closer between us you are greatly mistaken. I couldn't marry her if she would accept me."

"Why not?" I asked, staring.
"Because I have a wife already."

CHAPTER II.

I HAD nothing to say. I was greatly ashamed that I had introduced a subject that led to such a distressful disclosure. I stammered a half apology and wished I was miles away.

"Never mind," he said, calmly, though I could see that his hand had lost much of its steadiness. "I ought perhaps to have told you about it. I had fancied you thought me a single man, and even somewhat inclined to attract Miss Stevens. I ought to tell you and have you inform her; but if you would keep it from others—I hate to think of its being in everybody's mouth—I should be grateful."

"It is nobody's business," I answered, contritely. "Perhaps Miss Stevens ought to know. There is something I have several times thought she showed—well, never mind. It is not for me to attribute motives."

"You are probably wrong. She is kindness itself, and cares for art—that is all."

Then there was a period of silence between us.

At length he spoke again.

"I have only myself to blame for the predicament in which I am placed. I married my wife—a working girl—not because I loved her, but because she loved me devotedly. Our tastes were totally dissimilar. She and her mother were poor, and I may have been vain enough to think myself a desirable catch for people in their position. At all events we were married. Too soon the romantic glamour of my bride's attachment waned. She awoke to the disappointment that my friends could not assist her to rise in the social scale, the aspiration of a woman who has the least ambition. She had no power of lifting herself, and I could not support her by main strength. Then the society to which she naturally gravitated was of the same undeveloped type to which she herself belonged, a few fretful, unsocial, unIntellectual women and obscure men of like condition. You may imagine the sort of gossip which amused those people. My mother-in-law had a sort of false gaiety which, by attributing base motives to every action, made much mirth. The most common act of politeness received from her tongue was a discourteous twist. She soon discovered that I never took my wife out calling except by special request. She also discovered that my temper was sometimes fractious. That was true. If I brought home a picture and hung it on the wall it was apt to make me 'fractious' to find that it had calmly been removed, and some photograph or chromo hung up in the frame instead. Naturally I stormed and then the mother would sit crouched in a corner, humble and submissive, and the daughter would talk tearfully of being dictated to, and of never having her taste consulted, and of being tyrannised over. It was not long before things got to a pretty bad pass. I came home as rarely as possible, and stayed there for as few minutes as I could.

"It is sometimes said that the rock upon which most household disagreements gather force is lack of domestic talent on the part of the wife. This was not my wife's fault. She was an admirable housekeeper; she kept things too well; everything was too much in order and upon too exact a scale. Her economies were tedious; she could endure to go a week without meat, while I wanted meat upon the table every meal. She could use tea or coffee without milk or sugar; I needed a great amount of both of these commodities to make tea or coffee palatable. She wished me to give her the money to purchase our groceries with, and then, going to different places and cheapening and taking damaged goods, she managed to save half the money given her, which was handed to her mother to save, the terror of the mother's existence being that she should come to the poorhouse.

"Let the details go. You cannot be brought to feel the wearisome effect upon me by any such repetition. You must have my temperament, my disposition, my education. Accustomed to money and the enjoyment of life, accustomed to no attention to details outside my profession, the intrusion of these trifling annoyances was almost maddening. I could not sit down to the discussion of three-penny economies. If she wished to save, if it gave her pleasure, I had no objection; but she wished for my commendation for these cheese-paring ways. This I could not give. Slowly we drifted apart, and fractiousness on her part and stormy complaint upon mine increased in frequency.

"But the worst was still to come. All artists have a penetrating glance; the habit of their profession induces it. I was no exception to my class. My mother-in-law chose to say that this glance was also peculiar to the insane. I only laughed at her. But one day a gentleman called upon me while I was at work. He did not state his errand immediately, but sat chatting while I continued painting. Several times some question of his caused me to turn my eyes inquiringly upon him, and I noticed that he regarded me in

a strange way. But I should not have thought anything of it but for his final words:

"Do you know that there has been a complaint lodged against you—that you are fractious, perhaps in some degree mentally unsound?"

"I am sure I flushed up somewhat angrily at this, but my reply was cool enough.

"Who complains?"

"Someone in your immediate family."

"My mother-in-law," I said, contemptuously. "If you are sent by that woman you show your folly plainly enough. Anybody can see that she knows nothing."

"To tell you the truth, your mother-in-law was not the person. But though she seemed to defend you, I suspected that she was the real instigator. It was your wife who entered the complaint. She desired a writ of commitment in case you should show any violence. I think you are sane enough. May I warn you in a friendly manner against your own family?"

"I thanked him, and we parted. And it had come to this! My wife was intriguing to obtain possession of my property. She thought I wasted it. And this was the end!

"I arranged for a separate maintenance, and left my wife. From that time I have not seen and hardly heard of her. You will see why I feel somewhat prejudiced against marriage, and why I cannot speak to Miss Stevens in the manner which you are probably not to blame for thinking was due to her."

"I think nothing," I exclaimed, hastily. "I was a fool. You have my sincerest sympathy. I think she ought to know, for, between us, I am free to say that had you been free and cared to do so, I think you might have wooed successfully. She is a worthy woman. She, I fear, admires you. She is worthy of a noble man's love."

"She is all that is noble and good," said Crugen. "Tell her to-night. I will leave this place at once. It is better I should not meet her again."

CHAPTER III.

MISS STEVENS made no sign when I told her the foregoing sad story. But she did not make a long visit with us this time. In a week or ten days she found she must proceed elsewhere, and though she promised to stay over upon her return trip, for the present I had to forego my pleasant guest and my most desirable comrade in duets.

Music is a hobby with me, but if it were to have unlimited gratification it might become tiresome. We always like best that which is accomplished with some difficulty. I find that a philosophy of this sort is sometimes comforting.

My sorrow at losing Miss Stevens made me almost oblivious of her own feelings, but afterward I suspected that there were an unwonted droop to her eyelids and a pathetic quiver of her lips that were not wholly caused by melancholy at being obliged to cause me to suffer the deprivation of which I have spoken.

After she was gone I was perhaps more regular in my attendance at the office, and more punctilious in the discharge of my duties than I should have been had either my musical or my artistic friend been at hand. For Crugen, true to his word, had gone away. I had several dramatic plots to work up, and was fairly successful in satisfying my dramatic friends.

Whatever may be said of friendship versus ability, I think that with only one gift, that of making friends or that of doing excellent work, the friend-making gift will be the most serviceable.

If you have both, so much the better; but ability without friendliness treads a very thorny path. All my good things in life have come through friends. But for friends I do not know where I should be now. I have seen some men so crabbed and unsocial that the thought of what difficulties hedge in such natures has some times tempted me to urge upon the unthinking world a maxim like this:



["I SUPPOSE YOU KNOW WHAT SORT OF CLOUDS THESE ARE."]

"Get friends. After that everything is easy."

Time passed quietly on. I heard occasionally from Miss Stevens, but never from Crugen. One evening I was discussing a late supper when my wife entered the dining-room. I noticed a peculiar smile on her face, but thought nothing of it at first.

"Where have you been?" I asked.

"Out with the baby. There is a lady here to see you."

"Who is she?" I asked, indifferently. "What does she want?"

"Miss Felspar. I don't know what she wants. You had better go and see."

"Miss Felspar!" I gasped, and I laid my fork down.

"Now don't be frightened, she won't hurt you, she only has something to say to you. I wouldn't run away either," for I had glanced at the back door.

"I am not afraid," said I, with dignity. "I was only looking for my coat. I am not afraid of any such woman as she is."

"I wouldn't be if I were you. But if you don't want people to think you are you had better go in and see her at once."

I sighed and rose with sorrow depicted upon my countenance. I had rather have lost a five-pound note than submit myself to the interviewing I suspected was to follow.

Miss Felspar was of a type not uncommon among women. She was a reformer, an interested

philanthropist. She was one of those women who have both a natural and moral assurance of unlimited extent. She was not afraid to approach anyone and lecture him upon his duties to his fellows.

No man was safe from her intrusive, generous knight-errantry. If she heard that a family did not allow their servants the fullest rights, she would take occasion to call and lecture them upon the subject.

She was sometimes the efficient mouth-piece of a society, but oftener the mouth-piece of her own private opinions as to what was proper for her neighbours to do. She had a fluent tongue, and if somewhat illogical, was independent of any fear of being defeated for want of accuracy of statement.

A rather good-looking, firm-bodied woman of thirty, with a certain determined look that made her appear anything but feminine and weak. Well educated, acquainted with the best people, a leader in all literary and intellectual movements, it would be difficult to find a person with greater advantages, or one who was so unscrupulous in using them for what she thought was a high moral purpose.

"How do you do, Miss Felspar?" said I, entering the parlour and assuming a lightness of manner I was far from feeling.

"Good evening, sir," said she, seriously. "I have called to see you upon a little matter that ought to have your careful consideration."

I bowed meekly.

"You are very well acquainted with Mr. Crugen?"

"Yes."

"You probably knew of his domestic arrangements; that he is not living with his wife; that he has deserted her, in fact?"

"You need not ask me what I know," I answered, somewhat sharply. "If you know anything I shall be pleased to listen. Go on."

"Very well, sir. Then I know that he won the trusting heart of a dear, romantic little fool, and then wearying of her left her to pine in that loneliness which was only the more painful that for a brief time she had been full of foolish confidence and joy in his society. I should like to know if this meets with your approbation?"

I told her that I had perfect confidence in my friend.

"Indeed! Then I suppose you think that he was perfectly right in following Miss Stevens and asking her to marry him?"

"What! Has he done that?" I asked, startled.

"Yes, he has done that, and his wife not dead a month!"

"Oh! she died then?"

"Yes, 'she died,'" replied the lady, mocking my words; "died, if you can call it dying. I call it murder—actual murder! Shall a man crush the heart out of a poor woman and cause her as literally to die as though he had beaten her brains out with a club and escape the imputation of having committed a crime? I, at least, will endure no such wrong! I call it murder—foul and most shameful!"

"They did not agree, their tastes were dissimilar. She tried to get him shut up as being insane—sought thus to obtain his property and dissolve the marriage tie."

"Didn't he show insanity? Do you believe such a man as that ought to be free to go where he pleases? Ought he to have command of property, have means and liberty to continue his vile actions, to live in loose debauchery? So far from opposing the act that would have shut him up I think it was unfortunate that it did not succeed."

"That at, any rate, was the cause of their parting. He did not desert her; she deserted him."

"You try to make a fine distinction; but what was the real cause? He squandered his money. Is not that proof of insanity? No one ever accused her of extravagance. Her mother feared that they would come to want. She may have been over fearful, for I have heard he had a good deal of property, and that his pictures sometimes sold. But they had no knowledge of his resources; he kept everything secret from them; they had no hold upon him. Is this the proper way for a man to act? Ought he not as a sane man to settle something definitely upon his wife that she may know what to expect?"

"I think so; and perhaps he would if her mother had not interfered. A wife can do much, but a mother-in-law—"

"A mother-in-law is a useful person. In this case the wife was a fool. She thought nothing of such a provision; she trusted him implicitly. Bah! And now Miss Stevens will probably be as big a fool, if you don't interfere."

"How can I interfere?"

"Good Heavens, sir! can you say that you intend to countenance this marriage? After being the death of one woman you will assist him to kill another? I did think there was more manliness in men."

"What would you have me do?"

"I would have you assist me in preventing this marriage. We can get him shut up as a madman. We can get her away from his influence—marry her to someone else. Do something, for the sake of Heaven, to prevent so foul a wrong!"

"If she is willing to marry him nothing you can do will prevent it."

"That remains to be seen at least, I do not intend to sit down supine and make no attempt. I intend to do all I can and more. Is it possible you can have so little regard for a woman you have seemed to respect, hold woman's love to be so abject a thing that you can see it squandered

upon such a man as he? I am ashamed of the sex!"

"I admit that the case looks bad as you state it, but Miss Stevens is as well able to decide for herself as you are to decide for her. At any rate I am tired of the subject and won't interfere."

Bidding the lady an abrupt good evening I left the room.

* * * * *

I draw near to the end of this somewhat inconclusive narrative. I had hoped for an opportunity to get in a little critical analysis either on pictures or literature or music—something to let the reader know how much I knew—or thought I knew, I suppose it is the same thing—about these things.

But an author can stir in only a limited amount of citron in his literary cake. A little will pass, but to overdo it makes the concoction indigestible, and out it goes into the swill-pail—I beg pardon—the waste-basket.

There is in the mind of every author an ideal reader who sympathizes with him to such an extent that nothing he writes seems wearisome or intrusive. I have had my dreams of such a friendly reader, but, alas! he is probably dead, or has entered the profession and no longer reads any writings but his own. Perhaps he does not like my later style so well as my earlier one.

What I think is maturity he terms prosaic, and after you have given a man a bad name there is no more pleasure to be found in him. I used to admire Moreau, but after someone called him selfish, and another said he was an egotist, and Alcott accused him of pretending elaborate mystery and pedantically quoting out-of-the-way authors, I felt that I must also despise him.

About a week after Miss Felspar's visit Miss Stevens returned. There was something in her manner that implied an event of some sort either of the past or future. I took occasion to ask her if she had any information to give me or desired my advice.

"Please give me the opportunity of offering you advice," I said to her, "that I may be able to say, 'I told you so,' when you get into difficulties from having disregarded it."

"If you can advise me I wish you would. Mr. Frank Rollins has asked me to marry him."

Mr. Rollins was a literary man, and a friend of my own.

"The deuce he has!" I was astonished. "He never said anything to me about it."

"Why should he have said anything to you?"

"We are fast friends. He knew that you were my friend."

"Perhaps he did not have great hopes. Yet he seemed disappointed."

"Did you decline the honour? Perhaps you do not know that he's a well-connected young man and has money?"

"I knew of it; but he did not—I could not feel—I—"

She stopped, blushing.

"But you knew absolutely nothing of him!"

"I knew more of him than you think. I have read many of his pieces."

"Poo! What can you tell of a man from what he writes? As well judge of a carpenter by the doors he makes, or of a shoemaker by the patches he puts on. That's the greatest humbug in the world!"

"I think you can judge very well of a man by his writings."

"And I contend that you can judge nothing at all. Now what did Frank write that convinced you that you and he could only be friends?"

"For one thing, 'The Condensed Tornado,'"

"But that was a good joke. I liked that."

"I knew you did. It was essentially a man's piece. A man need not necessarily be effeminate to write pieces suited to the feminine temperament, but if he lacks that knowledge of fitness he is sure to offend."

"It didn't offend me. I laughed at the joke."

"So I laughed, but I pitied him too."

"Pitied him! What for?"

"That shows why you do not understand women. A man thinks it such a funny thing to get another man to do something and make himself ridiculous. A woman would not do that. For example, when those loafers tell a country lad that the steamboat clerk wants to hire a chamber-maid, and the great bulking, good-intentioned lad goes there and asks for a position that only a woman could occupy, it is not so laughable as pitiable. The boy is so honest, so anxious to get work, has had such a hard time, is so tired, and then so elated at the expectation of success—oh, one cannot laugh at such a stupid joke!"

I looked at Miss Stevens in surprise. I really had thought I knew something of criticism, but at once she had soared far above me.

"You believe in a literature of the heart?"

"Yes, always of the heart. That is why it seems so attractive. It is unobtrusive, and yet to those who seek there is so much to be found."

"I do not think you understand Frank. He is not at all cruel or thoughtless."

"Oh, I did not mean that. He is kind, but—he does not feel it at once. He is slow—he reasons it out. He is like you, willing to be instructed when the right way is taken."

"You could take the right way."

"No woman can be certain of the right way unless she loves the man."

"And why could you not love him? I tell you I never knew a finer fellow than Frank."

"He is a fine fellow, as you call him."

"Compare him with anyone. There is Crugen. In his way he is a superior person, intuitive, quick as a flash, but how full of moods and how erratic! Place the two together, and which can be depended upon in an emergency?"

"They are very unlike."

"Yes; but which are you certain of? Can you not be sure that Frank would be as true as steel to his convictions, while Crugen, resolute in his way, is subject to morbid suspicions—"

"I think he would be equally fixed in purpose."

Something in the tone caused me to turn to her with a searching look. The colour rose to her brow.

"So!" I said. "And the one you think you could instruct as he would like to be instructed is Mr. Crugen."

"I love him," she answered, as if ready to resent any opposition on my part.

"I do not doubt it now."

It is curious how things turn out. Crugen and his wife seem happy enough. Still I do not therefore imply that these conditions are unalterable. If there is anything which I have learned in living it is that things do not permanently remain as they are for any great length of time. This is not to assert that they go to an extreme, but they change.

I have known men who were happy with a horse and happy without a horse; not upon immediately succeeding days, but after an appropriate interval.

May we not conclude that in life a great many things become gradually necessary or unnecessary to us, that we learn to appreciate values, that we acquire slowly the power of taking the worth of the world, whether it is better or worse than our expectations?

I do not say that we ought to hold things with a loose and nerveless grasp, but to know that nothing is absolutely essential to our happiness is probably a wise philosophy. Possibly Crugen may learn this.

CHANGES IN MEN'S CLOTHING.

It is curious to note how great are the changes in men's costume. Looking only at one detail, the waistcoat, which last century was the cause of endless extravagance, we find that it is now of the utmost simplicity, and is for the most part hidden by the coat. But the waistcoat had its day! There was a time when dandies made it

a matter of pride to have dozens, nay scores, of waistcoats.

In Germany, during the last century, the luxury was considerable, and the love of display incalculable. One of the ministers under Frederick the Great used to boast that he had three hundred waistcoats and three hundred wigs. "So many wigs and so little head," said Frederick the Great, speaking of him. Men of position were required to have a positive museum of waistcoats in the eighteenth century. There were cloth waistcoats, silk waistcoats, waistcoats in velvet, waistcoats in cloth of gold. The waistcoat was a work of art, a painter's canvas filled with subjects. It was covered with admirable representations of hunting episodes, of court scenes, of famous fables, of village festivals. The waistcoat of the gallant of the period was enlivened with the pictorial history of the loves of Mars and Venus, the marshal's waistcoat was embroidered with military scenes, while one of the court dandies acquired fame (which he could not otherwise have enjoyed) by reason of the illustrations of popular plays to be seen on his manly breast! The rage for these illuminated waistcoats lasted till the end of Louis XVI.'s reign. The buttons by which these garments were fastened were not less worthy of notice. They were, for the most part, of about the size of our silver half-crowns, and were in steel, in silver, in precious stones, sometimes even diamonds.

The Count d'Artois, afterwards Charles X., was celebrated for the magnificence of his buttons, some of which were enamel, and embellished with the miniatures of celebrated beauties, of classic heads of the gods and goddesses. Some men of lower type wore on their buttons the portraits and initials of the queens of their hearts.

The revolution brought some changes about. The waistcoat was shortened, and its buttons bore the portraits of Robespierre, who was known among dandies as the man with the best powdered hair in France; or of St Just, or Fonquier-Tinville, or others. But this fashion soon disappeared, and the waistcoat has gradually lost its importance as an article of masculine apparel, and is now considered useful as a dépôt for the watch, but as an ornament is none.

IRISH MATCHMAKING.

NEARLY everyone has heard of Shrove or Match-making time, though few really know to what extent it is carried on in the south of Ireland. A few particulars and some instances of the "matches"—for such is the name that proposed marriages go by—may not be uninteresting to those unacquainted with the custom.

"Shrove-time" begins after Christmas, and ends on Shrove-Tuesday, or the day before Ash Wednesday; as during the ensuing seven weeks of Lent no marriages are celebrated in the Roman Catholic Church. About three weeks before Lent is the busy time for the "matchmakers."

Sometimes they are remunerated for the transaction, but far oftener they carry it out for mere pastime. Thus, when the well-to-do parents of a marriageable son find themselves getting on in years, and unable to look after their farm and all connected with it, they tell their boy that he must take a wife, and straightway send for their friend "the matchmaker." The old people, in such cases, are quite content to give up the farm to the son, seldom asking anything beyond their support and a seat in the chimney-corner in the old home for the rest of their days.

The son who thus obtains possession of a house and farm is considered well off; therefore the girl he marries must have equal, or nearly so, to his, or cattle wherewith to stock the land. When everything has been arranged between the parents on both sides, the day for the marriage is fixed, and the marriage fee made up for the priest, who generally gets from eight to twelve, though sometimes as much as fifteen or twenty pounds.

The young people may meet once or oftener before they are married, but sometimes they see each other for the first time only at the altar.

Near the village of G— lives a man named Mike S—. He is one of the principal match-makers in the neighbourhood. I know him personally and have often heard him speak of some of the matches he had made, or was about making.

The last few years not having been so good as usual for farmers, the weddings are not so many, and their fortunes in most cases were small. One of the best for this season—and over which Mike was very busy—was the marriage of a farmer's daughter whose fortune was one thousand pounds. The young man "spoken of" for her had a fine house, thirty milking cows, twenty yearlings, and "as fine a pair of horses as ever were put to a plough." "But that's not all," said Mike; "he has besides a brand new thrashing-machine!"

Mike was very indignant over another match he had made, and was obliged, through "the maneness of the ould people," to break it off again.

"They actually," he said, "wanted to make the young people feed some hens for them; and, shure, when I saw them so stingy, I says to the girl: 'Hold yourself higher than to enter the family!'" And she took his advice.

On another occasion when the aspiring bride and bridegroom met for the first time at the altar, the latter surveying his intended was shocked to find that she possessed only one eye. "Faix," said he, "I will marry no girl unless all her eyes are there."

When in the shop of the principal milliner in our village this Shrove, I asked if she had many bridal bonnets to make.

"No, indeed," she answered. "There's a girl of the Scanlans getting married to-day; but I made her bonnet two years ago." "How was that?" I asked. "Well," she replied, "they were on the way to the chapel, when they had a difference, and the match was broken off; but, like a sensible girl, she kept the bonnet, and now it comes in handy enough."

Perhaps one of the most curious of these extraordinary matches is the following:

There was a marriage arranged, and the friends were invited to the wedding. The party, amounting to the occupants of some half-dozen cars and a few horsemen, started for the chapel. Just as they stepped outside of it the father of another girl came to the bridegroom and offered him his daughter with ten pounds more fortune than he was getting with the one he was "promised to." "Done!" said the un gallant bridegroom; and straightway broke off the former match, and married the girl with the most money.

Few weddings in the neighbourhood are quite complete without Mike. He is a very extraordinary fellow, and gets into so many quarrels that, as his wife expressed it to me, "he would have been hanged over and over again but for the master." He lives on a wild moor surrounded by bogs.

A near neighbour of his having got married through his influence, Mike, in duty bound, went to the feast. As the night wore on, the excitement of dancing, combined with a plentiful supply of liquor, began to have a bad effect on our friend, until at last he could contain himself no longer; and snatching a kettle of boiling water from the fire, he turned bride and bridegroom and all the guests out of the house and hunted them over the bog.

The eatables provided on such occasions are plentiful and wholesome. Cold meat of any kind is considered an insult to offer. Everything must be hot. The fowls are generally captured, killed, ready and cooked during the absence of the wedding party at the chapel. Bacon is a favourite dish; and a leg of mutton is held in greater repute than roast beef. Sometimes a "barm-brack," or large currant loaf, remarkable for its size and abundance of fruit, is ordered from the baker, and forms "wedding-cake," a conspicuous addition to the table. This

"Shrove-tide" I saw a wedding-feast spread. At each end of the table was a huge piece of bacon.

Down the centre of the table, beef, mutton, and the produce of the poultry-yard were largely represented. Several decanters full of wine and bottles of whiskey were placed on the table. On a smaller table, tea, eggs, etc., and the "cake," were laid out. This was a small and quiet wedding, the ceremony taking place as early as nine o'clock in the morning.

I must not omit to note, however, that punctuality on the part of the bridegroom—and sometimes even on that of the bride—is by no means invariably observed. I will give one instance which happened this "Shrove-tide." The wedding was fixed for ten o'clock A.M. The bride came, but no bridegroom greeted her. She waited all day, till quite late in the evening, and still he came not. Late that night a message arrived from him to say he would be at the chapel after first mass next morning. Next morning faithfully came the expectant bride again; but again she had to wait for the dilatory bridegroom.

At length about seven o'clock in the evening of the second day the tardy lover appeared; and though many brides would, after such a trial, have lost patience for ever, not so with the faithful Irish lass. The priest did his duty; and the two went away as happy as their own loves and the plaudits of their cheery neighbours could make them.—A. B.

ROMANCE OF TRAVEL.

SOME years ago an American family party were travelling in Italy. In one of the chief cities they were sight-seeing in the usual fashion, when they noticed in the gallery with them a young man of distinguished appearance who seemed to regard their circle more than the pictures.

Returning to their hotel they thought no more of such a common incident as a youth gazing at a party of pretty girls. They had, however, made the chance acquaintance of a priest of their own nation who had become a regular visitor.

One day he took the father aside and said he had a communication of much importance to make to him. A young Italian nobleman of distinguished family, large wealth, sound health, and an excellent person in every way, had seen his daughters, fallen at sight deeply in love with one of them, whose name he did not know, had followed the party to their lodgings, ascertained who they were, and now begged to be allowed to visit them with the view of paying his addresses in person to the lady of his choice.

The natural Anglo-Saxon instinct was to decline the honour promptly and decidedly. But the priest represented that the young man was serious and honourable as well as titled and rich, and it would be but fair to the young ladies, as the particular one was unknown to them, to give both parties an opportunity of acquaintance, to see what might come of it, especially as beside his four daughters there were four other young and attractive ladies in his party, one of whom might be the lady he was smitten with. At all events, they ought to have the chance to answer for themselves.

Convinced of the honourable intentions of the candidate for the hand of one of the young ladies, and the girls thinking it a good joke rather than taking the matter seriously, the father consented that the priest should bring his friend to make their acquaintance. But on the evening designated, in order to mystify him somewhat, they decided among themselves each to wear the same costume, a black silk, with only the difference of coloured bows and neck ribbons, and to come into the room separately after he arrived. They carried out their programme perfectly. The elegant lover came punctually, was presented to the parents, and immediately after, giving time for the separate presentations and words

of ceremony, each young lady, not knowing but that she was the object of his affections, entered the room at regular intervals, underwent the formal introductions, and took her seat.

It was a procession which must have seemed endless to him, and almost a reproduction each time of the preceding lady. To an Anglo-Saxon's masculine nerve and heart it would have been a very trying ordeal, well calculated to bewilder a youthful lover and make him doubt the evidence of his eyes. But not so our Italian. With the easy grace of manner of his race and breeding, he preserved his self-possession. Faultlessly polite and closely scrutinizing all, notwithstanding the wearisome ordeal of genuflections and polite speeches he had to undergo, he remained master of the position. When the last and youngest entered his eyes brightened. He placed his chair beside hers and immediately began conversing, thus quietly intimating that he had at last discovered the being, the distant view of whom a few days before had captured his affections. It was smooth sailing for him now, and in a short time he made himself, by his manly elegance and intelligence, a welcome visitor and attendant of the family, doing the honours in his city, and in fact becoming one of them with perfect tact, such as accomplished Italian gentlemen thoroughly possess.

In a brief time, with the consent of the parents, he offered himself to the youngest, pleading his intense love at first sight, and declaring that he asked for no dowry, his own property was sufficient, and that if she was reluctant to leave her mother while so young, he would agree to give her a house, to settle a large income on her, and live half the year in her country and half in his own.

Furthermore, as he was somewhat of a radical in politics and republican in principle, and had dropped his legitimate title, he would resume it, and as his wife she would be Duchess—, with the arms on her cards and carriages, and all the other paraphernalia and social consideration which belongs to aristocratic rank of long descent in Italy.

This certainly was a tempting proposition besides the youth, sincerity, and unexceptionability of the suitor, but her heart was untouched, and she respectfully declined him after a long and passionate pleading of his cause, not unavoured by her own family. They parted excellent friends, and years afterward he married a princess of his own race.

This little episode of travel is related as an illustration of the Italian manner of falling in love and prosecuting a courtship. It shows that money is not always a consideration with the Italians in seeking foreign wives, and that the blandishments of titles do not always decide the American maiden to accept a lover because he has one.

MISCELLANEOUS.

It is rumoured that Russia intends to ask for a new loan of £20,000,000.

One of the points under the consideration of Mr. Childers with regard to the Volunteer organization is that of the officering of the force. Endeavours will probably be made to induce gentlemen in greater numbers to become candidates for commissions.

A CURIOUS EDITOR.—It is not often that you hear of an editor with a curiosity. Most of them accept earthquakes, tornadoes, murders, fires and floods as every-day occurrences, and even a nitro-glycerine explosion next door would not interrupt the routine work of the sanctum very long. But a French editor, and the editor of a Lyons paper at that, had a curiosity to know how a person feels when drowning. He therefore put up a job on himself. He arranged to come within a hair's breadth of drowning, but was to be pulled out in the nick of time, rolled on a barrel, hauled over the sands, thumped on the stomach, and otherwise resuscitated. All went well during the first act. He leaped into the

water, refused to struggle, and gradually sank to the bottom. At the proper moment he was hauled in by a rope, and act second commenced. This was an occasion where an editor was too smart. They rolled him according to programme, and seven or eight men tired themselves out with rubbing him and hanging him up head downward, but he was a dead man. He may know how it feels to drown, but he'll never trouble the public with a description of his feelings.

The Duke of Sutherland is said to have bought a whole county in the neighbourhood of Sioux Town City.

It is said that the Princess Imperial of Prussia will shortly visit England.

The King of Holland has conferred upon the Duke of Albany the Grand Cross of the Order of the Dutch Lion.

As illustrating the exceptional length of the debates last Session, it will be interesting to mention that Hansard runs to nine volumes. This is two more than were ever published before as the result of a single Parliamentary Session.

In accordance with ancient custom the Court of Aldermen have presented the Prime Minister, the Lord Chancellor, the Master of the Rolls, and other high dignitaries with sufficient cloth for a new suit of clothes each, as a specimen of the excellence of London-made cloth. It would be interesting to learn in what part of the metropolis this cloth was manufactured.

There is every reason for believing that the question of constructing an electric railway in London is being seriously considered. Indeed the project has so far progressed that the locale has been mentioned; it is said to be the neighbourhood of Charing Cross.

The latest Parisian table decoration is to place flat baskets of flowers near each plate with the menu tied on the handle.

The richest portion of land in France is the region extending from Blanquefort to St. Estéphe in Upper Médoc, and where the best claret comes from; it comprises an area of 50,000 acres, every one is wealthy in the neighbourhood, and would be happy, only for the phylloxera. The clarets here produced comprise the four brands—peasant, artisan, middle-class, and grand; the latter is divided into five categories, including Château-Lafitte, Château-Margaux, Latour, Haut Brion, etc. Château-Lafitte is the oldest vineyard in Médoc, and is owned by the Rothschild family; 185 acres are under vines, producing annually 180 hogsheads of 200 gallons each; price for last year's wine, 6,000 francs per hogshead. The annual expenses of the vineyard are 100,000 francs. There is wine in the cellars since 1797, and the average number of bottles there is 100,000. Château-Margaux belongs to M. Fillet-Wil; the area of the vineyard is 100 acres, and the yield from 125 to 170 hogsheads.

A MAN in his 102nd year is reported to have been operated on successfully for cataract at Vienna.

PARLIAMENT has been summoned for Tuesday, February 7, then to meet for the despatch of business.

The English Cart Horse Society, established with the object of improving the breed and promoting the breeding of English cart-horses, proposes to hold its annual show at the Agricultural Hall in February, 1882.

CALIFORNIA has begun to turn its grapes into raisins. Three years ago it produced no raisins at all. Now the raisin crop already amounts to 150,000 boxes, and is worth a hundred thousand pounds.

An Australian paper says that wild horses are increasing so fast in Australia that they are quite a plague upon the land and have to be shot down, as wolves or bears would be.

PADDINGTON is likely to have a park. Already a third of the sum required from public subscription has been obtained. Of £100,000 no less than £33,000 is acknowledged this morning. Before it can become a "park" it will need to be planted with trees and filled with plants. At this moment it is a dreary waste. Of the advantage of the park in the proposed situation

there can be no doubt. In a few years what is called the Workmen's City will be an over-crowded collection of houses, surrounded by dwellings stretching out to Willesden. Already most of the country walks in that direction have ceased to be. London is growing on that side, and seems likely to grow until it includes Uxbridge and Harrow itself, and the famous school becomes part of the great metropolis.

LOVE'S SEASONS.

When the glory of Spring its raptures lent,
Our love was but in its dewy dawn,
But through the forest at Morn we went,
Two youthful hearts to each other drawn.

"Have me now,
While the birds are mating,"
Sang I low,
"For our friends are prating,"
"Oh, not in the Springtide merry!" she
cried;
"Love is our Playmate here,
Let us laugh and be glad alone," she sighed,
"In the Babyhood of the year."

When the rosy Summer her blessing laid
On the grateful land, with our love at
bloom,
Still through the forest at Noon we strayed,
From shine to shadow, from gleam to
gloom.

"Have me now,
While the world's in blossom,"
Sang I low,
"For you rule my bosom."
"Oh, not in the Summertide warm!" she
cried.
"Love is but Comrade here.
Let us dream and be pleased alone," she
sighed,
"In the Maidenhood of the year."

Now Autumn glimmers in purple and gold,
And our love is rich in its harvest prime;
And still through the forest at Eve we hold
Our two-fold passage with steps that
rhyne.

"Have me now,
For the world grows dreary,"
Sing I low,
"And my heart grows weary."
"Ah, the Autumn days are full sad!" she
cries;
"Love is an Angel here.
We should dream together, I think," she
sighs,
"In the Womanhood of the year."

My thoughts flow on to the Winter grim,
As I press her beautiful hand in mine;
While our forest-path in the Night grows
dim,
But all seasons now in her smile combine.
"Mine, I know,
You are now for ever,"
Sing I low,
"And no more we sever!"
"Ah, what are the Winter days," she cries,
"Since Love will be Monarch here?
"We are all in all to each other," she sighs,
"In the bleak Old Age of the Year!"

GEMS OF THOUGHT.

If anyone speak ill of thee flee home to thy own conscience, examine thy heart; if thou be guilty it is a fair instruction; make use of both, so shalt thou distil honey out of gall, and of an open enemy make a secret friend.

If you would relish food, labour for it before you take it; to enjoy clothing, pay for it before you wear it; if you would sleep soundly, take a clear conscience to bed with you.

FESTINING, fidgeting, ennui and anxiety are

the most common causes of disease. On the other hand, high aspiration and enthusiasm help digestion and respiration, and send an increased supply of vital energy to all parts of the body.

THERE are words that can separate hearts sooner than sharp swords—there are words whose stings can remain in the heart through a whole life.

A boy who is constantly reminded of his faults, and told he is the making of a bad man, will invariably grow up to fulfil the prophecy. Better show him the brighter and better side of manhood and help him to grow up to be what he should be.

STATISTICS.

SINCE the year 1874 the sheep-flocks of the whole of Great Britain show, it appears, the alarming diminution from 30,313,941 to 24,582,154, or almost precisely 20 per cent.

FIFTY years ago in France the average age of a Minister was 65 years; 25 years ago it was 60; at present it is 50. The present Cabinet contains three Ministers aged 62, one 60, one 53, two 49, one 48, one 44, one 43, one 39, and one 35. The 12 Ministers represent a total of 600 years.

An Italian professor has just issued a ghastly volume on suicide. In all this world it seems Calabria stands lowest on the scale of those who are weary of breath. Norway stands third, and Poland fourth, England and America are very high, and the recklessness and misery which make life insupportable reach the maximum in the centre of Europe, from Geneva to Paris, and through Saxony, Baden, Prussia, and the Austro-Hungarian provinces. The small German States are the very highest. Suicide has increased everywhere for the last forty years; even in Ireland, where the figure is so low, from 10 in the million to 18 in the million of population, while England and America have mounted from 62 to 68, Prussia from 74 to 142, France 54 to 150, and Saxony rushes on with an average of 264. Childless widowers are by far the largest number on the sorrowful list.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

ROAST BEEF WITH YORKSHIRE PUDDING.—Three-quarters of an hour before the beef is done pour nearly all the drippings from the pan, then place the meat on a small wire trivet, or lacking this put it on a wire grating, or even a few sticks across the top of the pan. Pour the pudding into the pan and return all to the oven; the drippings from the meat will fall on the pudding—cut in pieces—around it. If preferred, the latter may be baked in a separate pan, and served around the meat in the same manner.

FOR THE PUDDING.—To a pint of sifted flour add a teaspoonful of salt and half a pint of milk; add the beaten yolks of four eggs, then another half-pint of milk. Lastly put in the four whites beaten to a stiff froth. Don't use baking powder, but beat furiously; turn into the hot pan and bake three-quarters of an hour.

A BACHELOR'S PUDDING.—Four ounces grated bread, four ounces currants, four ounces apples, two ounces sugar, three eggs, a few drops of essence of lemon, a little grated nutmeg. Pare, core, and mince the apples finely—sufficient, when minced, to make four ounces; add to these the currants, which should be well washed, the grated bread, and sugar; whisk the eggs, beat these up with the remaining ingredients, and when all is thoroughly mixed put the pudding into a buttered basin, tie it down with a cloth, and boil for three hours.

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NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

R. S.—To obtain light instantly without the use of matches and without the danger of setting things on fire, take an oblong vial of the whitest and clearest glass; put in it a piece of phosphorus about the size of a pea; upon which pour some olive oil, heated to the boiling point, filling the vial about one-third full, and then seal the vial hermetically. To use it, remove the cork and allow the air to enter the vial, and then reseal it. The whole empty space in the vial will then become luminous, and the light obtained will be equal to that of a lamp. As soon as the light grows weak its power can be increased by opening the vial and allowing a fresh supply of air to enter. In winter it is sometimes necessary to heat the vial between the hands to increase the fluidity of the oil. Thus prepared the vial may be used for six months.

G. E.—Louisa De La Eame (Ouida), the novelist, is an English lady of French extraction on the father's side. She was born at Bury St. Edmunds about 1840, and at an early age she went with her mother and grandmother to reside in London, where she began to write for periodicals, and while still under age commenced her first novel, "Granville de Tigne," which was first published as a serial in a monthly magazine. Her pseudonym, "Ouida," was taken from a child's mispronunciation of Louis.

H. R.—The first idea of the steam-engine was suggested by the Marquis of Worcester, in his "Century of Inventions," in 1663, in describing an apparatus consisting of steam boilers, which worked alternately, and of pipes conveying steam from them to a vessel in which its pressure operated to force water upward. Other experiments were made from time to time, until in 1705 Thomas Newcome, John Cawler, and Thomas Savery patented the first steam-engine really deserving the name. It consisted of a cylinder, containing a piston driven upward by steam from a separate boiler, and forced downward by atmospheric pressure, when the steam below the piston was removed by condensation. The engine was used only for pumping, the pump-rod and piston-rods being attached to opposite ends of a beam, as in ordinary engines. Various improvements were made on this engine until 1763, when James Watt, an instrument maker at the University of Glasgow, in repairing a model engine, began a series of improvements which finally rendered the steam-engine universally applicable. In 1773 he began building the new engine, adding other improvements from year to year. Among his inventions are the separate condenser, the double-acting principle, parallel motion, the regulating action of the governor, and many other improvements. The invention of the crank and fly-wheel is disputed between Watt and Pickard. From that time to the present progress of invention has suggested many new features in the construction of the steam-engine in its various applications to the needs of different branches of trade.

M. M.—To get stout avoid eating all kinds of salted meats and fish, pickles and lemons. Also avoid drinking all sour wines, acids, and vinegar. Farinaceous food is most fattening, and cocoa, chocolate, and milk, will assist in producing the desired result. Sugar in almost any form is good, and vegetables are particularly desirable.

A. W.—All Saints' Day, or All Hallows, is a festival observed in the Roman Catholic Church on November 1, in commemoration of all those saints and martyrs in whose honour no particular day is assigned. Halloween, or Hallow Eve, the night of October 31, has for many centuries been the occasion by young people for the performance of certain games and spells by which they are supposed to discover their future partners. Burns's poem, "Halloween," describes the superstitious customs and beliefs of the Scotch peasantry concerning this festival. These are supposed to have been of Pagan origin. In more modern times, and among the less superstitious, it is observed simply as a merry-making occasion. Of the various games indulged in, the following will be found among the most amusing: One is to take an apple and pare it carefully, so that the rind would form one long piece, and then to take hold of the rind by one end and wave it round the head three times. Then the eyes are to be shut, and the seeker has to throw it over the left shoulder. Whatever letter it resembles is the initial of the future lover's Christian

name. Another way is to turn the back to a looking-glass and to eat the apple, looking over the left shoulder backward. When it is half eaten the future lover will show his face in the glass. The apples so used are not ordinary apples; they have to be won either by bobbing the head in a pail of water and seizing them with the teeth, or by gaining them at the quintain. Here the apples are suspended on sticks of wood, having lighted tapers at the other end. The contestants' hands are tied behind them, and as the apples swing backward and forward they have to grab for them with their teeth, at the imminent risk of having their curls singed by the twirling taper. For the men there is a special divination. Three saucers are placed on the table, one filled with clean water or milk, another with dirty water and suds, and the third empty. The prier into futurity is driven from the room. Outside his eyes are bandaged, and he is then led up to the table. If he seizes the empty saucer, he is never to get a wife; if he takes one with milk, his wife will be chaste and well dowered; but if his adverse fate gives him the dirty water, then this wife will be all she should not be. One way for a young girl to ascertain her future husband's appearance is to steal an egg, to boil it in secret, to eat half the yolk and half the white, to fill up the remainder with salt, to place it in the left stocking, which is to be rolled up and tied with the right garter, and then the fatal bundle is to be placed under the pillow. All these things done in perfect silence, the future bridegroom is sure to appear in her dreams.

SOMEWHERE!

Is there not somewhere in this great, wide earth
A gentle heart that thinks this night of me?
Some one to turn away from scenes of mirth
To muse in solitude and secrecy
On scenes in which we mingled in the past,
On hopes in which we joined long since gone by?
Is my face pictured as they saw it last,
And am I wished for with a yearning sigh?
These longing fancies doth some loved one share,
Somewhere? Somewhere?

I draw aside the curtain for a view
Of starry worlds in heaven's broad, moonlit dome,
And as these ardent eyes their ranks pursue
The question rises: "In some far-off home
Do other eyes than mine now skyward steal—
Eyes that I love, yet never more may see,
And though we drift apart, do they still feel
A loneliness because afar from me?
This night does one soul for my presence care,
Somewhere? Somewhere?"

I would I knew that this great bliss were mine;
I would this certainty could be mine own,
That hearts for whom I languish, mourn and pine
Remember me when lonely and alone!
With hands outstretched, for friends like this I pray,
To bless my name, to love me tenderly,
And when I die, though years shall roll away,
Regret my loss and often speak of me!
Is there a love so deep that I may share,
Somewhere? Somewhere?

'Tis hard to be forgotten—hard to know
Things will go on the same though we should die,
Birds sing as sweetly, flowers as thickly grow
Around our homes, though in our graves we lie!
The gap our absence makes will soon be filled,
The tears some eyes may shed soon cease to flow;
Then let us strive, before our hearts are stilled,
To stamp our image, as we onward go,
So deep, though dead, that hearts for us will care
Somewhere! Somewhere!

PUZZLES.

XII.
CHARADES.

1.

One of the vowels for my first select.
In my second a vehicle you may detect.
My third will name a farmer's tool, I wot.
My whole, combined, is a tale by Walter Scott.

2.

Dexterity my first, egotistical my second;
My third will suffocate; and an edible plant
My whole may be reckoned.

XIII.

SQUARES.

1.

A mine (rare). A Turkish title of dignity. Conduct Open.

2.

A flat fish of turbot kind. One who uses. Counsel (obsolete). A plant.

3.

Not on the surface. A girl's name. Shade trees. To depart.

4.

An instrument of music. Having wings. The upper timbers of a cart. Spoil.

I am a word of seven letters, often seen in drawing-rooms, although used as a snare. I have two syllables, the first being English, also one of the mythological gods; the second, as pronounced, is what we are all aware of.

Behead me, and in French you'll see
A symbol of eternity:
Behead this twice—that is, until
You find I am a French word still,
Without which you would surely die.
Kind reader, who or what am I?

XV.

EBUS.

1. A seaport in Galicia (here Sir John Moore fell).
2. A province on the frontier of Portugal.
3. A strong seaport in Catalonia.
4. A town in Biscay, where Wellington defeated the French in 1813.
5. A town in Estremadura, where General Hill defeated the French in 1812.
6. A province bounded by the Pyrenees.
7. A cape on the coast of Andalusia, where Nelson defeated the combined fleets of France and Spain.
8. An ancient town of Andalusia.
9. A city in Leon, where Wellington defeated the French in 1812.

The initials of the above, read downwards, will name a celebrated Spanish author.

ANSWERS TO LAST WEEK'S PUZZLES.

VIII.

S
H Y
F R A M E
L U C K N O W
C O N C E N T R E
S H A K E S P E A R E
S C U L P T U R E
P A L E R M O
S H A R K
A R M
E

IX.

Crocus.

X.

M A I D N I L E E V E N W I F E
A C E E I R O N V I N E I D O L
I R I S L O A D E N O S F O I L
D E S K E N D S N E S T E L L A

XI.

Scorn to do a mean action. Spare well and spend well. Procrastination is the thief of time. Where there is a will there is a way.

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